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Poor Man's Copyright: Intellectual Property and Cultural Depictions of the White Working Class in American Popular Music

Jason Lee Guthrie
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Abstract

The growing literature on cultural depictions of the White working class in American popular music has touched on issues of copyright, compensation, and residual ownership of song rights. This study expands upon existing work by conducting case studies on three influential figures in American music history: Stephen Foster, Woody Guthrie, and Phil Walden. Though each of these figures produced popular music in different historical and cultural contexts, the music they produced depicted—and was marketed to—the White working class. Interestingly, each of these figures also struggled to effectively assert and manage the copyrights in their respective works, both within formal music industry structures and to their audiences. Cultural perceptions and bias played a role in the challenges they faced, as did their own incomplete understanding of intellectual property. By situating male, White working class musicians as simultaneously less privileged than industry elites and more privileged than other marginalized groups, this study can help to illuminate a greater understanding of the ways that race, gender, and class intersect in American popular culture.

Keywords: copyright law, music history, popular culture, popular music, production cultures, Stephen Foster, Woody Guthrie, Phil Walden

The so-called “poor man’s copyright” is one of those enduring myths about intellectual property that seems to pass down to each successive generation of creative artists, and especially to musicians. Essentially the idea is that an unknown, or “poor,” artist without access to formal structures of protection can secure their original work by mailing a copy of it to themselves through the postal service. A sealed envelope bearing an official stamp of the date received is believed to protect the integrity of their original ideas and serve as legally binding proof of authorship.

A lawyer or copyright scholar is likely to point out that the efficacy of a poor man’s copyright is unproven in a court of law.¹ Moreover, while formal registration still conveys certain benefits, since the 1976 Copyright Act took effect, all original work in the United States has inherently been granted copyright protection from the moment it is fixed in a tangible form.² In the digital age, a metadata tag on a document, photo, or voice memo is likely to be better proof than a postal stamp for verifying date of creation. Yet, legal efficacy is not the only—or even the most—interesting aspect of the poor man’s copyright myth. Questioning such phenomena provides an opportunity to ask why such myths endure, why there are gaps between legal policy and public perception, and how artists negotiate value up towards formal industry structures and out toward their audiences.

This research is not so much interested in establishing the date that the poor man’s copyright myth began or whether it would hold up in court. Rather, it is interested in the historical factors that create such myths and obscures knowledge about intellectual property that might directly affect an artist’s economic reality. It is also interested in cultural factors that contribute to access to copyright protection and discourses about the efficacy of copyright.

To investigate these issues, this article presents three case studies that span the history of American popular music from its beginning in the early nineteenth century up to its height in the late twentieth century. Stephen Foster was the first American to make a living as a full-time songwriter. He was the composer of some of the most memorable melodies in American music history, but also a deeply problematic figure due to his influence upon inequality in American popular culture. Woody Guthrie is often referred to as “America’s Folksinger” and though he wrote more than three thousand songs in his lifetime, “This Land is Your Land” has eclipsed them all to become an unofficial national anthem. Guthrie has also been championed as an exemplar among advocates for an expanded

public domain, but this characterization is complicated by historical evidence. Phil Walden was a music executive who began his career managing legendary rhythm and blues acts. He is most known for his success building the Southern Rock label Capricorn Records and for launching the career of the Allman Brothers Band.

Each of these figures worked in very different historical time periods of American music and played different roles. Foster was strictly a composer, while Guthrie was also a performer and was especially skilled at reimagining traditional and folk melodies. Walden was on the business side of the music industry and was most active at the height of its economic success in the latter half of the twentieth century. Primary sources from historical archives and contemporary journalism help illuminate the ways that each of these figures understood and used copyright—even if at times their understanding was incomplete.

While the differences of these three figures help to show historical time and industry breadth, their similarities recommend them as ideal for a particular type of inquiry. In addition to all being White and male, the White working class were central to the lyrical content of the songs they produced and were also their target audience demographic. This through-line offers advantages for a longitudinal study comparing change over time. As this research will detail, American popular music was at its very beginnings targeted toward the White working class. Though it would eventually spread throughout the social strata and around the world, its historical roots have shaped its content and industry norms in ways that still produce profound effects today.

Centering copyright in such a study helps to foreground questions of authorship, ownership, and creative agency, but also to raise issues of inequality. Copyright, as a property right, was only available to White men at the beginning of American popular music's history. The expansion of those rights to women and people of color has been slow and fraught.³ This study conceptualizes White working class musicians as simultaneously less advantaged than industry elites and more advantaged than women and people of color. With that understanding in place, let us turn to see what these case studies can show.

Stephen Foster

One of the defining features of copyright law is that it has always been “sluggish in responding to technological change.”⁴ Music copyright

clearly evidences such lethargy as it was 1831, more than forty years after the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and the first American Copyright Act, before “musical compositions” were even granted explicit protection.⁵ There are historical and cultural factors that played into the delay, most especially an early American preference for European cultural works and a corresponding desire to obtain them cheaply by not acknowledging international copyright claims.⁶ Yet, the relationship between copyright law and popular culture can be seen even in early America. When the Confederacy rebelled, its leaders took every opportunity to implement policies contrary to the Union side, including recognition of foreign copyrights. This was partly to appeal to the British, whom they hoped would support their side in the Civil War, but also had an air of petty antagonism as “Southern gentlemen... would rather pay quintuple the price for a British edition than buy a pirated Yankee one.”⁷

The first uniquely American genre of popular music also began in the 1830s. Blackface minstrelsy’s earliest incarnations involved White performers donning makeup and exaggerated accents to cruelly caricature an imagined version of African American culture.⁸ Minstrelsy was initially performed by and marketed to working class Whites, though over time its cultural reception widened significantly.⁹ Arguably, no artist had more impact upon this evolution, and by extension the growth of the nascent American music industry, than Stephen Foster.¹⁰

Foster’s unique ability to marry catchy melodies with nostalgic lyrics made minstrel music more appealing to upper class sensibilities. It also sentimentalized the racist stereotypes making them less overt but more pernicious.¹¹ Occupying a liminal space between upper and lower social class was a defining feature of Foster’s life. He spent much of his career trying to recapture the social standing his father’s financial mismanagement had lost the family.¹² “Oh! Susanna” was Foster’s first hit and its success was truly unprecedented.¹³ Foster was in his early twenties when it was released, and he understandably made mistakes in handling his copyright interests. For example, as he replied to an inquiry from a publisher about the song’s copyright status: “I gave manuscript copies of each of the songs...to several persons before I gave them to [another publisher] for publication, but in neither instance with any permission nor restriction in regard to publishing them.”¹⁴

Kevin Parks characterized Foster’s missteps with “Oh! Susanna” as an “object lesson” of what not to do when managing copyright interests.¹⁵

The exact figure Foster earned for the song is not known, but if it was anything it was a mere pittance compared to overall sales.¹⁶ It did lead to future opportunities, however, as Firth, Pond, & Company, one of the largest publishing houses in America at the time, offered Foster a contract with favorable terms in 1849.¹⁷ One early Foster biographer claimed that “though Foster made little or nothing from his earliest success, he learned two things: that he could write songs people liked to sing, and that these songs would bring money to the man who published them.”¹⁸ Yet, there is little historical evidence that Foster ever learned to effectively manage his affairs.

An important dynamic of music industry publishing in early America was the tension between securing copyright to ensure compensation and encouraging demand for sheet music sales by public performance. An example can be seen in Foster’s handling of the song “Nelly was a Lady.” He had circulated a manuscript to a friend in New York for minstrel performers to use in their acts.¹⁹ His publishers intervened to explain why this left the song vulnerable to infringement: “From your acquaintance with... ‘minstrels,’ & from your known reputation, you can...introduce [your songs] to the public in that way, but in order to secure the copyright exclusively for our house, it is safe to hand such persons printed copies only” and added “if manuscript copies are issued particularly by the author, the market will be flooded in a short time.”²⁰

Another example can be seen in Foster’s contentious relationship with the minstrel bandleader E. P. Christy. A common arrangement at the time involved displaying the names of popular performers on the title page of sheet music as an early kind of celebrity endorsement. Christy’s reputation was such that he demanded his name not be used unless it was the only name featured. Foster had to apologize for violating this policy early in their relationship, claiming a title page was “cut before I was informed of your desire that your name should not be used in connection with other bands.” Foster attempted to smooth things over, adding that he “wish[ed] to unite with [Christy] in every effort to encourage a taste for this style of music so cried down by opera mongers.”²¹ This statement also revealed Foster’s class consciousness as his own work was looked down upon by purveyors of highbrow forms like opera.

Foster offered the exclusive endorsement arrangement Christy required in February 1850.²² Unfortunately by June, Foster had to inform Christy of another mistake, expressing “regret that it is too late to have

the name of your band on the title page” of a new song but promising to “endeavor to place it (alone) on future songs” and “cheerfully do anything else in my humble way to advance your interest.”²³ Perhaps this series of missteps led to the decision to allow Foster’s song “The Old Folks at Home” (better known today as “Swanee River”) to be attributed as “Written and Composed by E. P. Christy” when it was released in 1851.²⁴

Though “The Old Folks at Home” is remembered as one of Foster’s signature songs today, when it was released its use of exaggerated Black dialect in its lyrics connected it with the lowbrow connotations of Blackface Minstrelsy. The copyright was registered on Foster’s behalf but public attribution of authorship was initially given to Christy so that Foster could avoid such connotations and market his personal brand on more respectable parlor music. However, public reception of “The Old Folks at Home” ended up being overwhelmingly positive among White audiences of all classes. This prompted Foster to try again to change the terms of his agreement with Christy, writing “by my efforts I have done a great deal to build up a taste for the [minstrel] songs among refined people by making the words suitable to their taste, instead of the trashy and really offensive words” that the initial, lowbrow version of minstrelsy often used. Foster continued, asking to “reinstate” his name on the title page, even saying he was “not encouraged in undertaking this so long as ‘The Old Folks At Home’ stares me in the face with another’s name on it.” Foster offered to refund Christy’s initial deposit paid for the naming rights, and then offered a fascinating insight into his artistic motivation: “I find I cannot write at all unless I write for public approbation and get credit for what I write.”²⁵

As to Christy’s thoughts on all this, he encapsulated them succinctly on the back of the letter he received, writing “S.C. Foster - A mean & contemptible – vascillating [sic] skunk & plagiarist.”²⁶ This correspondence demonstrates the intersection of copyright and authorship with social class and popular culture. Steven Saunders maintained that this letter also demonstrates Foster’s investment in the “values of the middle class and [that he was] palpably uncomfortable with some of the low, vulgar, and low-class associations of minstrelsy.”²⁷ Still, Foster knew that composing such work was an economic necessity and he had no moral qualms about doing so—as long as his name was not associated with any negative connotations.

Foster’s efforts to manipulate public perception through misleading attribution notices ultimately backfired. By not effectively connecting

his name with his most popular work he failed to reap the full benefit of its success. His actions betrayed a fundamental misunderstanding of the value of intellectual property rights. Foster was offered a new contract in 1854 from Firth & Pond that was even more favorable than his previous ones and included terms of up to a ten percent royalty.²⁸ This contract was written in Foster's own handwriting, which led an early biographer to speculate that he "dictated his own terms."²⁹ Even if this speculation is true, it glosses over the fact that Foster did not compose work at a rate that would capitalize on these favorable terms during this period, nor did he manage his financial affairs responsibly.³⁰

The culmination of Foster's copyright mismanagement can be seen in his fateful decision to release future royalties from his back catalog in a contract that went into effect in 1858.³¹ In sum, Foster calculated that he had earned nearly ten thousand dollars from his songs and estimated his future earning from those songs at a shade under three thousand.³² He ultimately accepted less than two thousand dollars in a one-time payment made in March of 1857.³³ He continued his profligate spending habits and by the time his final contract with Firth & Pond expired in 1860 the advances he had taken out against future royalty payments left him in debt to his publishers by nearly fifteen hundred dollars.³⁴

Foster's decline mirrored the nation's own as it descended into civil war. He spent the war living in Manhattan's lower east side selling songs to whomever would buy them and receiving only "a paltry sum for what other composers would demand and receive a fair remuneration."³⁵ Foster died in January 1864 at thirty-seven, either drinking himself to death or intentionally taking his own life.³⁶

Woody Guthrie

The market for American music that contracted during the Civil War eventually rebounded and continued to expand throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century.³⁷ Publishing dynamics stayed largely the same as long as sheet music sales and public performance were the basic industry commodities. By the turn of the century, new technologies were already presaging the disruption that sound recording and radio would soon bring.³⁸ Copyright law struggled to accommodate these new technologies, such as in an infamous 1908 case that initially ruled manufacturers of player piano rolls did not have to pay royalties to song composers.³⁹

That ruling was superseded by the mechanical licensing provision in the 1909 Copyright Act, a provision that would go on to have major consequences for the ways copyright law was applied to emerging broadcast media and mass communication technologies.⁴⁰ Like Foster, who had little precedent to draw from for his breakout success, musicians outside the privileged circles of publishing centers like Tin Pan Alley had to make decisions about copyright protection for their work with little guidance or frame of reference. Artists in emerging genres like rhythm and blues, country and western, and folk music struggled to build audiences, gain artistic legitimacy, and navigate legal requirements. Perhaps no early twentieth-century musician exemplified this more than Woody Guthrie.

Guthrie was interested in music as a child in Oklahoma and performed publicly as a teenager in Texas, but his career really got going at twenty-five when he and his cousin Leon “Jack” Guthrie got a gig co-hosting a radio show on station KFVD in Los Angeles, California.⁴¹ In fact, it was a song entitled “California!” that was the first he ever registered for copyright. Guthrie had to rely on his second radio co-host Maxine “Lefty Lou” Crissman to transcribe the necessary sheet music manuscript that accompanied the application, as he only played by ear.⁴² Using a model letter he found in a book about intellectual property that was forty years out of date, Guthrie sent in the manuscript along with the requisite fee on September 9, 1937.⁴³ The Copyright Office responded by sending an official registration certificate along with more up to date information about registering future work.⁴⁴

Despite the time and effort involved in registering the song, in a note accompanying “California!” in a songbook sold to listeners of the radio show Guthrie seemed dismissive of the value of copyright. He wrote: “This song is Copyrighted in U.S., under Seal of Copyright #154085, for a period of 28 years, and anybody caught singin it without our permission, will be mighty good friends of ourn, cause we don’t give a dern” and then added, “Publish it. Write it. Sing it. Swing to it. Yodel it. We wrote it, that’s all we wanted to do.”⁴⁵ Many proponents of expanding the public domain have cited this seemingly anti-copyright notice as evidence of Guthrie’s disdain for intellectual property protection, or even for the idea that creative works can be owned by their creators at all.⁴⁶ Yet, historical evidence about Guthrie’s evolving understanding of copyright tells a different story.

The copyright story of “Oklahoma Hills” neatly encapsulates Guthrie’s evolution. He penned a similarly dismissive notice on an early version

of it that read in part, “I ain’t got it protected by no copyrights or patents, so go ahead and do whatever you want to do with it. It’s yores [sic].”⁴⁷ Despite this audience-facing comment, however, behind the scenes he cared quite a bit about getting credit for his work. The idea of a poor man’s copyright dates at least to the late 1930s, as Guthrie included both “Oklahoma Hills” and “California!” in an envelope filled with songs that he mailed to himself to “prove originality of this material and its arrangement in this combination.”⁴⁸

It is unclear why Guthrie did not officially register “Oklahoma Hills” for copyright as he had “California!.” He did send a KFVD-era songbook that included both songs and several others to Alan Lomax at the Library of Congress and made sure to stress in an accompanying letter that while his cousin Jack was having success performing “Oklahoma Hills,” Guthrie’s version was “the pure dee original.” He went on to express that he did not want any of his songs “published without my wrote down permission, that is the ones that has got my John Henry on them” although he did acquiesce to not “specially car[ing] about the profit.”⁴⁹

Guthrie would change his mind even on that score when in 1945 he heard Jack’s version of the song playing on a jukebox and discovered his cousin “had stolen the song by filing its copyright in [Jack’s] own name.”⁵⁰ Guthrie knew the evidence was in his favor and demanded that Jack give him the credit and royalties he was due.⁵¹ After some back and forth, “ultimately they agreed that it could be published with both names as composers.”⁵² The initial back payment for royalties was a thousand dollars and money continued to come in for years afterward.⁵³

Guthrie continued to care about getting credit for his work and to push back against the cultural norms of the folk genre that diminished individual authorship. He moved from California to New York in the early 1940s and often performed with an ever-changing rotation of folksingers known collectively as The Almanac Singers. Lomax had advised the group that “giving individual credit was the only way to head off copyright battles in the future, but the others were strongly opposed” to this arrangement.⁵⁴ Woody demurred to group attribution for his song “Rueben James” but later regretted it and vigorously objected when future attribution conflicts arose.⁵⁵

Guthrie’s voluminous correspondence with his second wife Marjorie Mazia provides further evidence of his thoughts and actions about copyright. By 1942 he expressed his intention to “get [his] songs all writ-

ten down, words and music, and send one good clean copy...to be Copyrighted.” He had also learned that it was “cheaper to copyright a whole collection than to copyright each song separate.”⁵⁶ He still believed in the efficacy of the poor man’s copyright, as he conveyed to Mazia in all caps:

TO COPYRIGHT ANY SONG:
DO THIS:
WRITE WORDS & MUSIC PLAINLY, IN INK, ON
GOOD PAPER (OR TYPEWRITER) –
PUT \$1⁰⁰ WORTH OF STAMPS ON ENVELOPE,
ADDRESS TO MR & MRS. W. GUTHRIE, OUR AD-
DRESS, DROP IN ANY MAILBOX.
WHEN IT COMES BACK, **DO NOT OPEN**
ENVELOPE, LAY IT AWAY & SAVE FOR FUTURE
PROOF.⁵⁷

By the late 1940s the language Guthrie was using about copyright was dramatically different than that used early in his career and had evolved to meet industry norms such as this notice on a book of children’s songs he cowrote with Mazia: “No portion of this book nor these songs may be used for commercial purposes, nor reproduced in any form, without the written permission of the copyright owner.”⁵⁸

Guthrie’s efforts to copyright his work eventually paid off. The Weavers, a folk outfit made up of former members of The Almanac Singers, gave Guthrie a ten thousand dollar advance to license a cover version of “So Long (It’s Been Good to Know You)” in 1950.⁵⁹ The Weaver’s manager Harold Leventhal enquired about the song’s copyright status in October of that year.⁶⁰ This resulted in Guthrie making some “urgent calls” to producer Moe Asch, who recorded Guthrie’s original version a decade prior. Asch reassured him that “we had copyrighted the SO LONG song before... THE WEAVERS, DECCA, could as you put it ‘swipe’ it from you” and added “you darn well know that a copyright is never lost as long as it is registered in the Library of Congress even if you lost your copy, and Marjorie has more than enough business sense to know this.”⁶¹ Guthrie must have enquired at The Copyright Office about the song as well as they sent a duplicate certificate of registration in November.⁶²

By far, Guthrie’s most famous song is “This Land is Your Land.” Its earliest version, initially titled “God Blessed America” was written on

February 23, 1940 and did not yet include the famous “made for you and me” refrain.⁶³ Though he did write “Original copy of this song” on the first lyric sheet, the song was not registered for copyright at the time.⁶⁴ It would not be officially registered until 1956 and by that time, Guthrie’s mind had all but succumbed to Huntington’s Disease.⁶⁵ As much as he could, he was an active participant in the transfer of his copyrights to a trust established for the benefit of his children.⁶⁶ As it became clear that “This Land” would achieve the rare level of enduring popularity it has he wrote to Mazia “You can use alla me and my moneys there Marjorie just any old way you please...I know that God’ll pay you more moneys for ‘This Land’ than He did for ‘So Long.’”⁶⁷ These are not the words of an artist who is anti-copyright, but rather one whose understanding of copyright and estimation of the value of their work evolved significantly throughout their career.

Phil Walden

The opportunities made possible by sound recording and radio began to be exploited by popular music in the early twentieth century, but the burst of American prosperity post World War II brought an unprecedented influx of income to the industry.⁶⁸ Yet, by the 1970s copyright law still labored under the logic of the 1909 act and updates were needed. The Sound Recording Act of 1971 provided federal copyright protection for sound recordings that had previously been subject only to state and common law.⁶⁹ This was an important, though imperfect, part of the solution, but many in the industry felt that there was more reform work to be done.⁷⁰

One of the problems copyright reform needed to address was piracy. The illegal duplication of sound recordings for illicit resale grew exponentially in the 1960s and 1970s.⁷¹ Alex Sayf Cummings went so far as to use the history of music piracy “to trace the arc of American political thought about copyright” in general as it “gradually accepted a new rationale for property rights based on the value of a firm’s investment.”⁷² Piracy was unsurprisingly robust around industry centers in New York and Los Angeles, but also thrived like kudzu in the American South. In fact, the reason that “bootlegging” is a synonym for music piracy is that many former bootleggers simply switched from moonshine to music as the market for illegal liquor dried up.⁷³ A southern music executive who was at the center of reform efforts to address music piracy was Phil Walden.

Walden’s music career began as a college student in his early twenties managing legendary rhythm and blues acts like Sam & Dave and

Otis Redding. Walden's recognition of Duane Allman's potential while Allman was just a session player proved to be a turning point for both their careers.⁷⁴ When the Allman Brothers Band released *At Fillmore East* on Walden's Capricorn Records label in July 1971, that potential was fully realized.⁷⁵ Walden's profile was raised to such heights he told *Creem* magazine in November 1972 that both the Nixon and McGovern presidential campaigns had sought his endorsement.⁷⁶ Walden would back neither, but he would soon throw his political support behind the sitting Georgia Governor—Jimmy Carter. Walden and Carter had a mutual acquaintance in Carter's executive assistant Cloyd Hall, who introduced them during Carter's "Stop and Listen Tour" in the summer of 1971.⁷⁷ An article by Art Harris in *Rolling Stone* reported that soon after this meeting Carter "lent his weight to a strict antipiracy bill" in Georgia that Walden lobbied for. The article also claimed that at the time "piracy of records and tapes, hawked cut-rate at truck stops across the state, has been costing the industry \$10 million a year."⁷⁸

Walden worked at both the state and federal levels to reform copyright law, as a trove of unpublished documents abandoned when Capricorn went bankrupt in 1979 reveal.⁷⁹ On December 2, 1974 Georgia Senator Sam Nunn wrote to express his appreciation for Walden's advisement on "the differences between counterfeit and pirated tapes" and to share his concern about the millions of dollars in revenue lost to piracy.⁸⁰ The other Senator from Georgia, Herman Talmadge, wrote a few days later to confirm receipt of correspondence from Walden about copyright reform and to express his own commitment to fight the southern piracy problem.⁸¹

Governor Carter wrote in early December as well to relate that passage of the state-level anti-piracy law was imminent. He assured Walden that, although his term would expire before the bill was signed, Carter would see that governor-elect George Busbee received all the information about why it was necessary.⁸² Busbee signed the bill into law on February 27, 1975.⁸³ Cloyd Hall, who by this time was working for Walden as Vice President of Corporate Development at Capricorn, was quoted in the *Atlanta Journal* as saying he "believe[d] this new law [would] help eliminate the pirate in Georgia," as well as "problem[s] in neighboring states by closing down the factory operations in Georgia."⁸⁴

Once the Georgia legislation was signed, Walden and Hall turned their focus toward federal reform. James Fitzpatrick, a Washington lawyer consulting on what would become the 1976 Copyright Act, wrote to

Walden expressing appreciation for “Hall coming to Washington to help out on the mechanical royalty problem” and “a series of very productive meetings with members of the Georgia delegation.”⁸⁵ Senator Nunn was working behind the scenes for Walden as well. On July 10, 1975, Nunn wrote to the chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, James Eastland, on behalf of “one of his constituents in the recording industry.” The fact that this letter was kept in Walden’s files, along with Nunn and Walden’s previous correspondence, suggest that Walden was that constituent. The concern that Nunn expressed on Walden’s behalf was over “the impact of the proposed rate increase in Section 115 of the bill.” Draft legislation at this stage looked to raise the mechanical royalty from two cents to three, a change that “could amount to nearly \$100 million a year more that consumers would have to pay for the records they buy.”⁸⁶

Fitzpatrick wrote on August 6 to Hall and the team at Capricorn on how to get Senator Talmadge to show as much support on the “mechanical rate issue” as Senator Nunn had. While Fitzpatrick conceded that, unlike Nunn, Talmadge was “disinclined to write a letter” to the Judiciary Committee, Fitzpatrick wanted Walden to “urge [Talmadge] to express Capricorn’s concerns.”⁸⁷ Back in Georgia, Lieutenant Governor Zell Miller wrote a letter sent statewide to law enforcement noting that “many persons seemingly are not aware” the state anti-piracy had gone into effect and urging officers to “enforce it in [their] communities.”⁸⁸ These surviving sources evidence targeted, strategic efforts by Walden and his team to use their political connections to influence copyright reform regarding music piracy and mechanical rates.

Press coverage of Walden and Carter in the lead up to the 1976 presidential election brought the relationship between popular culture and politics to the fore. Richard Bergholz wrote for the *Los Angeles Times* about a meeting that Walden arranged for Carter with Hollywood music moguls in June 1975. Bergholz noted Carter’s need to be “considered as a serious contender instead of a faceless also-ran” as he sought to raise his national profile ahead of the presidential primaries. The article ended with a quote that revealed the shared interest Walden and Carter had in showing the rest of America that “the people in the South ha[d] come a long way in the last 15 to 20 years.”⁸⁹

There were strong insinuations of scandal in Walden and Carter’s relationship by reporters, which was not surprising in the post-Watergate era.⁹⁰ In the aforementioned *Rolling Stone* article from December 1975,

Carter did admit that his state senate “floor leader” worked on the Georgia anti-piracy law, but he insisted that he “never had any conversation with Walden on that bill.” Walden also insisted on a lack of nefarious motive, saying “A lot of people around Carter have wondered what I want...I can honestly say I don’t want anything.”⁹¹ The available historical evidence supports Walden and Carter’s denial of any unethical dealings in their relationship, but reporters were understandably suspicious as the level of popular music involvement in politics during Carter’s campaign was a relatively new development.

Larry Rohter at the *Washington Post* noted this turn of events in a piece about Walden and Carter. He wrote that while only a few years earlier politicians were seen as a “parade of graysuited grafters, the choice between cancer and polio,” by the bicentennial election the industry was “lining up behind various presidential and senatorial contenders, offering endorsements and throwing fund-raising benefit concerts for the candidates of their choice.” Walden was quoted in the article about the many benefit concerts Capricorn acts had put on for Carter’s campaign, calling the events the most “effective fund-raising tool you can use right now, federal election laws being what they are.”⁹²

Jim Jerome profiled Walden and Carter for *People* magazine. Jerome wrote that “though he may be twice-born spiritually, Carter owes his political salvation partially to the power Walden wields in the musical-political complex, which has outmobilized the military-industrial in this year of campaign financing reform.” Jerome quoted Walden as invested in changing the “stigma—the racist Southerner ‘Johnny Reb’ thing—that we weren’t as competent or smart as other people.” Walden also went on the record about his motivation for supporting Carter: “I have only two motives—Jimmy’s my friend, and I want to have a cleaner, better government in Washington. [Carter] asked me...what I would expect if he wins, and I told him ‘absolutely nothing.’”⁹³

President Ford signed the 1976 Copyright Act into law on October 19, two weeks before he lost the election to Carter.⁹⁴ Journalistic focus largely turned away from Walden and Carter’s relationship, partly because the campaign was over and also because of the sensationalized emphasis on Carter’s infamous “lust in my heart” comment to *Playboy* magazine.⁹⁵ When Walden and Carter did appear together in the press though, copyright was still in the conversation. Writing this time for the *Washington Post*, Art Harris described a September 15, 1977 meeting between Carter,

Walden, and other music executives in the Roosevelt Room where Carter “listen[ed] attentively to industry concerns about tape piracy, copyright dilemmas and the visa problems musicians with shaggy beards and Medusa curls must sometimes endure at border crossings.”⁹⁶

Discussion

From Blackface Minstrelsy to Folk Music to Southern Rock, American popular music has always sung about and been sold to the White working class. Publishing and distribution interests were at first owned exclusively by upper-class White males. The power and agency they held only trickled down to other classes, races, and genders through prolonged struggle and policy changes. Examining case studies of cultural depictions of the White working class in American popular music can serve as a kind of midway point from which to view these intersections. Putting copyright in the center of these case studies helps to ground historical inquiry in the material evidence of registration and business records, while also interrogating the “metaphysical” intersections of the law and creativity.⁹⁷ The history revealed in these case studies shows that specific actions by historical actors had real world consequences, both in their own time and upon future generations.

Stephen Foster’s copyright mismanagement not only cost him dearly, it was arguably the origin point for cultural stereotypes that brand creatives, and especially musicians, as unprofessional and bad with finances. Class sensibilities drove much of Foster’s behavior. In his worldview, “the upper-middle class...of which Foster considered himself a member, if sometimes a precarious one” were those whose sensibilities he wanted to appeal to while his “‘others’ [we]re the white working class.”⁹⁸ He internally devalued his most popular songs because, in his mind, they were written for those of a lower station than the one he rightfully belonged to. Interestingly, copyright and lowbrow entertainment have played a role in Foster’s enduring popularity. When early mass mediums such as film and television, and especially Warner Bros.’ popular Looney Tunes animated shorts, needed score music they found that audiences still enjoyed Foster’s melodies, which were conveniently free to use as they were in the public domain.⁹⁹ That historical happenstance has kept Foster’s songs in the popular vernacular and the racism they have helped to covertly carry through American popular culture is as prevalent today as it has ever been.¹⁰⁰

Woody Guthrie's early career comments that dismissed the value of copyright must be understood in context. When early folk and country musicians said anything publicly, they were obliged to play the role of uneducated hillbilly because it is what music industry executives wanted and what they believed audiences expected.¹⁰¹ Guthrie had a way of turning that stereotype on its head and often came across as a kind of working class sage.¹⁰² He played up the hillbilly character especially hard when he wrote contracts or negotiated financial matters.¹⁰³ As Guthrie's career progressed, and as his audience expanded, he learned more about the value of copyright protection. His views, and perhaps more importantly his actions, evolved accordingly.

Phil Walden can be viewed as the culmination of the White working class struggle for legitimacy in popular music. Walden had a keen eye for talent, but his business savvy was what really set him apart. Rather than settling for just recording hit records for big-city parent labels, Walden built a local, vertically integrated network of companies that brought in unprecedented revenue to his community in Macon, Georgia and allowed for a high degree of autonomy in creative decision making.¹⁰⁴ Walden's claim that bootlegging was killing Capricorn's profits and that fixing copyright would solve the problem was a major oversimplification—a fact that Walden himself would have been well aware of.¹⁰⁵ Acts like the Allman Brothers Band who improvised at live shows may have even had some net benefit from the fan loyalty built through trading bootleg recordings.¹⁰⁶ But Walden was also savvy enough to realize that the optics of southern music piracy provided an opportunity to expand his influence, and he used his industry contacts and his political connections to do just that.

These case studies further support the findings of previous work on the White working class and popular culture. Jonathan Arac coined the term "hypercanonization" to describe resistance to engage with problematic racial representations in scholarship on Mark Twain.¹⁰⁷ Jennie Lightweis-Goff adapted Arac's critique and applied it to counter a widespread "conversion narrative" in Foster scholarship that papered over the racist content in his most popular songs by claiming, with scant evidence, that he eventually evolved beyond such views.¹⁰⁸ Further applying the hypercanonization frame to Foster's copyright use helps to push back against unfounded characterizations of him as "America's first professional songwriter" and instead reveal how his unprofessional behavior affected his

own career and set the tone for how the publishing industry would view and value future songwriters.¹⁰⁹

Hypercanonization also arguably played a role in why the narrative of Guthrie as anti-copyright has been widely accepted despite a lack of evidence. That narrative spread in response to a 2004 case in which an early internet content creator developed a political parody video set to the famous melody of “This Land is Your Land.”¹¹⁰ While scholars and pundits rightly criticized the publisher’s attempts to use copyright to censor the video, in the fervor of turn-of-the-millennium optimism about the internet’s democratizing potential Guthrie’s actual copyright activities were obscured, and even ignored. Narratives that pushed to paint copyright as *only* a tool of corporate power and to tout an unrestrained expansion of the public domain placed Guthrie as their figurehead. Yet, in Guthrie’s case his heirs use the copyright claim in “This Land” primarily to restrict its use by commercial interests and neo-fascist groups seeking to co-opt its meaning.¹¹¹ Remembering such artists as the legends we want them to be, rather than as people they actually were, doing the things they actually did, will never be a basis on which to build historical narratives that lead to meaningful future change.

Kathryn Brownell’s conception of “showbiz politics” has illuminated the connection between popular culture and politics.¹¹² Focusing on copyright brings this connection into especially stark relief and can extend the time period that Brownell explored back to the beginning of American popular music. Foster’s pro-Union political songs composed during the Civil War are arguably the first time an American songwriter ever lent their celebrity to a political cause. These songs would be forgotten today were it not for the few copyright and related business records that have survived.¹¹³ Copyright as proxy for partisan politics continued after the war as well. While the Confederacy recognized international copyright as an advantageous way to simply do the opposite of whatever the Union did, “in the postwar years, native anti-intellectualism as well as political distrust of the North... ma[de] the South a hotbed of political opposition to any similar action by the United States Congress” and “a curious alliance of disparate personalities and interests continually thwarted international copyright legislation, until at last Benjamin Harrison signed a new act in 1891.”¹¹⁴

Indeed, popular music and politics have been inextricably bound together throughout American history. Guthrie’s career is an excellent exem-

plar of this. He was such an effective union labor organizer that he drew the ire of Senator Joseph McCarthy during the Red Scare of the 1950s.¹¹⁵ Guthrie certainly believed that popular culture was *more* powerful than legislation—he once wrote “Let me write the nation’s songs, I don’t care who makes their laws”—but during his career he learned to appreciate the power of the law as well.¹¹⁶ He similarly learned much about racial equity as his career progressed, and eventually became nearly as outspoken about racial politics as he was about organized labor.¹¹⁷

By the time of Walden’s ascendancy in American popular music the connection between it and politics had become fully overt, embodied in his connection with President Carter. Carter would even go so far as to say that support from Walden’s most famous acts “basically put us in the White House.”¹¹⁸ Walden was far from a paragon of personal virtue, but particularly through his relationship with Carter he did make sincere efforts to change perceptions of class and race in popular music and in the wider American culture.¹¹⁹ These efforts are best understood as a rare bright spot between the introduction of President Nixon’s “Southern Strategy” and President Reagan’s ultimate execution of its goals.¹²⁰ In many ways, Foster’s genteel veneer over the racist pulse of Blackface Minstrelsy foreshadowed a conservative political shift from the overt brutality of Jim Crow segregation to more covert forms of reproducing inequality. When that inequality is considered in historical work on popular culture, it is vital that romantic, nostalgic notions of artistic archetypes do not pre-determine a narrative unsupported by evidence.

Conclusion

Charles L. Hughes concluded his book *Country Soul* about the connections between race, class, and American popular music by emphasizing that “first and foremost, musicians ‘work together,’ and that a full appreciation of their accomplishments requires us to frame the story around their working experiences.” This study has sought to answer that call by considering copyright as a vital, multi-faceted aspect of creative work. Hughes continued that we must “interrogate the conventional wisdom about what makes music racially progressive and what makes it reactionary” and “re-consider the ways that race has been expressed and lived in the United States.”¹²¹ This study has sought to question such conventional wisdom and instead return to primary sources by and about artists to center inquiry

from their perspectives—even if those perspectives are often flawed and incomplete.

For Foster, Guthrie, and Walden, copyright represented multiple things. Compensation for their work was certainly an important aspect, but it was often not the primary motivator. As Guthrie once wrote, “I want to create, not count money.”¹²² As much or more importance was attached to the legitimacy of authorship and certification of ownership that copyright conferred, an especially prized commodity for an individual from a lower social class vying for upward mobility. An important part of the poor man’s copyright myth is the romantic notion of a starving artist with only their raw creative genius to support them. When the power and protection that only elite gatekeepers can provide is inaccessible, it can be easier to valorize marginalization than it is to find the motivation necessary to create change. Historical scholarship on popular culture must resist valorizing and romanticizing marginalization to instead emphasize the moments when change is created.

Foster’s status as a former elite that disdained his recently acquired lower class status directly contributed to the creation of negative cultural archetypes about creative artists. Guthrie embodied the starving artist archetype but examining the material evidence of his copyright activity belies many of the romantic notions attached to it. Walden embraced such archetypes to ultimately transcend them. And while Southern Rock’s heyday may have passed, modern country music has picked up the torch of White working class cultural depiction and carried it to new heights of profitability, though at times to new lows of racial representation.¹²³

Like nearly all aspects of American culture, race, gender, and class intersect with popular music in complex ways that are often overgeneralized and misunderstood. The only way to untangle the complexity is through historical inquiry rooted firmly in historical evidence. For cultural depictions of the male, White working class, copyright and related records provide an excellent thread to trace trends and unravel long-held assumptions. Because women and people of color were not allowed to own property, including intellectual property, at the beginning of American popular music such records would not provide the same utility for tracing those stories. That does not mean that they should not be told, however. If anything, they are even more interesting, and are certainly more important to understand in terms of social effects.

While the antebellum White working class male was the initial target audience for American popular music—the group to be entertained by and pay for it while upper-class White males reaped the rewards—White women, when they were mentioned at all, were relegated to domestic obscurity.¹²⁴ Enslaved people were subjugated further to be the object of its ridicule. Yet, through nearly two centuries of struggle, Black artists and Black creativity have inspired every single genre of American popular music from blues to bluegrass to rock 'n' roll to hip-hop.¹²⁵ The struggle for Black legitimacy in the music industry follows a much longer and more dramatic arc than the White working class, but Black music is fully ascendant in both popularity and profitability today as artists such as Sean “Puffy” Combs, Jay-Z, Beyoncé, Kanye West, Drake, and The Weeknd show.¹²⁶ Recently, Black artists—and in particular Black women artists like Mickey Guyton, Brittny Spencer, and Adia Victoria—are reclaiming the impact of Black creativity on spaces historically viewed as the exclusive purview of the White working class like folk, Americana, and classic country.¹²⁷

It is also worth pointing out that, despite being replete with inequality, popular music is one of very few public spheres where any sort of sustained racial integration has taken place in American history. Faith traditions, with all their complexity and contradiction, are another. From the 1920s onward, all American popular music can trace its origins to the inter-racial Pentecostal tent revivals in the American South around the turn of the century.¹²⁸ The excellent journalistic and academic work cited in this study evidence the efforts of those spheres to push back against injustice. In fact, it is in resistance to inequality that artists—like spiritual leaders, journalists, and academics—often produce their best work. It is absolutely vital to celebrate the successes and condemn the failures in these institutions if their ultimate goal is to create a more just, equitable world.

To take but one example, in late 1968 Wilson Pickett, a Black vocalist, and Duane Allman, a White long-haired guitarist, were in a recording session at FAME Studios in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. The rest of the band wanted to break for lunch but neither Pickett nor Allman were welcome at the local restaurant. They stayed behind during the break, and Allman pitched to Pickett the idea of covering The Beatles’ “Hey Jude” with an extended guitar solo at the end. That recording is universally considered as the moment the genre of Southern Rock was born.¹²⁹ Such historical events show that while existing cultural dynamics may constrain impulses

toward equality, cultural creativity remains one of the most effective forces for change.

Endnotes

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21. Stephen C. Foster to E. P. Christy, February 23, 1850, FHC. Note that this copy is a photocopy. The original is held by the Library of Congress, call number ML95.F8.
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Pandemic Disruptions: Emerging Themes and Stories Among Music Ecosystems

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Abstract

COVID-19 disrupted our lives, in-person events, creative networks, and the ability to fully thrive in music communities around the world. Researchers had already identified that local music ecosystems were under stress due to structural and economic challenges. This study analyzes beliefs and local transformations after the first year of the current pandemic based on the stories from 128 subjects—music community participants, change agents, and local leaders around the world—who participated in twenty-six focus group panel sessions during a three-day virtual conference in April 2021 and nine separate and specific geographic focus group sessions, recorded March through September 2021. Through these recorded conversations, we gathered insights into their differing challenges, transformations, and emerging music organizations. These documented discussions generated real-time rich qualitative research about changes around the world. Through qualitative analysis of the resulting data, we identified themes, differing regional models, and areas for future research. We also created a video archive to support comparative research for anyone looking to gain insights into our transforming current music environments.

Keywords: music cities, music geography, COVID-19, resilience, creative and cultural industries, live music, venues, cultural policy, narrative analysis, comparative policy analysis, music ecosystem

Introduction

The first COVID-19 case was reported in China on December 30, 2019 and researchers reported the first U.S. case on January 21, 2020.¹ By March 2020, governments and industry leaders had canceled large live events and, in some regions, began a life-changing series of lockdowns barring gatherings, travel, border crossings, and in-person work in many sectors. A 2020 *MEIEA Journal* article captured both the initial music industry actions in winter and spring 2020 and impacts across the world, as well as the convening of the first Amplify Music Virtual Conference in April 2020, which brought together more than thirty music industry organizations around the world to discuss impacts.² At that time, community music ecosystem leaders looked forward optimistically, and live music stakeholders pushed out event calendars, speculating that concerts and in-person events would resume in late 2020 and into 2021.³

Impacts, however, continued. Despite vaccines becoming available in late 2020 and reaching 300 million doses a day administered by mid-2021, weekly death rates globally stayed above 50,000 until spring 2022.⁴ New strains of COVID-19 supplanted prior strains, with expansions of Alpha, Delta, and Omicron in the second half of 2021 and into 2022, now including countries like Japan, Australia, and much of China, which had previously mitigated COVID-19 with restricted borders into re-closings and restrictions. As of this writing in May 2022, China continues its zero COVID strategy with new lockdowns in Shanghai and Beijing. Up to this point, more than 6 million people have died of COVID-19 globally with more than 525 million reported cases.⁵ In the U.S., almost 83 million people have had COVID-19 and more than 1 million have died.⁶ COVID-19 continues to spread, though now with less virulent strains, and concerts are still being canceled as artists and bands test positive.⁷

Our research captured stories from local music change agents one year into the current pandemic. We analyzed 128 subject stories from fifteen countries and twenty-four U.S. states during 2021. We identified common themes from conversations with key leaders and stakeholders within these music ecosystems and found five common themes as we explored differences and similarities in actions, outcomes, and new understandings.

Pre-COVID-19 Music Ecosystem Research

Before the emergence of COVID-19, researchers had long studied community music ecosystems, geographies, and spaces by genre, history,

and social structures. For this research, we are framing music ecosystems as the complex systems layers of music geographies, including scenes, cities, regions, and countries. Research in music ecosystem studies as complex systems began its modern growth in the early 2000s (see Table 1).⁸

Study Type	Sample and Core Research
Creative Cities and “Music Cities” Meta Studies	Researchers have explored the relationships with local economics, growth (Florida 2012), and comparative ecosystem structures (Terrill et al. 2015).
Individual Music Cities Studies	Research organizations have created ecosystems to deliver “Music City” credentials and consulting, connecting cities in peer communities and setting expectations for systemic change (Sound Diplomacy 2019; Baker 2017, 2019; Creative Footprint 2019). Creative Footprint, based out of Vibe Lab, uniquely built a crowdsourced research model that reported on the venue economy with interwoven stakeholders.
Cultural Economy and Urban Geography Studies	These studies have looked at patterns of growth, erosion, economics, and systems behavior (Straw 1991; Nash and Carney 1996; Hall 2000; Hospers 2003; Scott 2006; Hudson 2006; Pratt 2008; Flew 2008; Falck et al. 2018; Seijas 2020).

Table 1. Pre-COVID-19 community music ecosystem research.

In preparation for a presentation at the 2020 South by Southwest Conference, we examined the themes and processes for the individual city studies. Researchers published more than 70 individual city and region studies from 2008 through 2021. Most of the studies detailed preexisting conditions and challenges of a region before COVID-19. We explored this regional research literature to identify previous themes and stated ecosystem challenges before the pandemic and to help us identify new themes of change and transformation. Many reports concluded that there were chinks in the regional ecosystems and recommended changes to them to build support and good health. Those issues surfaced and expanded in our 2021 focus groups after a year of pandemic impact.

Research Design and Challenges

Central Question for 2021

With a year passing from the start of the pandemic, we took the opportunity to gather music industry regional leaders and ask what challenges, revelations, and solutions were emerging locally around the world in the year since the start of the pandemic.

Methodology

This qualitative mixed-methods study explored themes and narratives from music community change agents and leaders from fifteen countries. We had two sets of qualitative primary sources: 1) publicly available online documents and 2) focus groups we recorded at two conferences and in subsequent regional interviews. In April 2020 we convened and recorded panels from a broad international group of speakers and panelists representing more than thirty countries. We used the findings from the 2020 conference as data to design an April 2021 conference, and to develop initial themes for this analysis.

For this segment of research, we recorded 35 sessions featuring stories and interactions from 128 music community leaders in which they shared thoughts about their businesses, relationships, and communities. The main sessions were held in April 2021 and individual sessions were held from March through September 2021. These stories were limited by the semi-structured interview prompts from the moderators and/or interviewers, various time limits, the framings of the topic sessions in the conference, and the comments of the individual focus-group participants. We have built an archive of shared stories and various types of narratives, threads of newer stories, and patterns that emerged from that time in the pandemic, though we are certainly sometimes missing stories that no one mentions.

Recruitment Process

For the 2021 focus groups and panel discussions, we invited 262 participants, reaching out to participants of the 2020 Amplify Music Conference and more than 45 organizations that the principal investigators already worked with. We started with this convenience sample and then invited those participants to invite other participants, as a limited snowball sample. We were limited to the number of participants (109) that we

could fit into thirty-minute sessions across the three days of the virtual conference as well as who we could bring together for the thirty-minute geographic sessions (22 subjects) we continued to convene from March through September of 2021.

This recruitment and recording strategy had benefits and flaws. We sought diverse perspectives and minority points of view, and instead were limited by scheduling and recruitment method challenges. We had a mostly white subject base, with strong concentrations in Southern California and Colorado, where both research leads reside. We reached 41% female and nonbinary participants by intentionally recruiting female participants and including at least one female subject in most sessions. We did encounter dominant voices from certain sectors and companies that potentially added bias to the samples. We also experienced a performance element: these sessions were in front of online audiences, recorded, and shared on the public internet. As a result, we had a fair number of individuals voicing what they thought they were supposed to say for their professional roles and communities. Participants often spoke on panels with others who shared similar worldviews and experiences. As a result, these themes are indicative and embedded in certain types of community stories as starting material for future researchers exploring this unique time in music history.

In April 2021, we ran and recorded 26 thirty-minute focus groups/discussions/videos with 109 speakers across three days. We followed from March through September 2021 with nine thirty-minute interviews with community leaders in music and governance (Table 2).

Date	Region
March 23, 2021	Colorado, U.S.A.
April 7, 2021	India
April 30, 2021	Japan
May 13, 2021	Australia
July 7 and 28, 2021	Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.
July 29, 2021	NOLA (New Orleans), Louisiana, U.S.A.
September 10, 2021	Northwest Arkansas, U.S.A.
September 16, 2021	Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.

Table 2. Geographic community focus group dates and regions (in order of recording).

Timing and Challenges of Regional Interviews

We simplified the regional interview design and completed nine sessions in eight regions. We had planned to gather and record local leaders across twenty different geographies from March to September 2021. We designed this plan in early 2021 before the Alpha, Delta, and Omicron variants cases, illustrated in Figure 1, emerged around the world. To complicate scheduling and real-life matters for our subjects, regions we were analyzing were experiencing new waves of COVID-19. One such region, India, was experiencing a new outbreak of the Alpha variant even as we were interviewing subjects there in early April 2021.

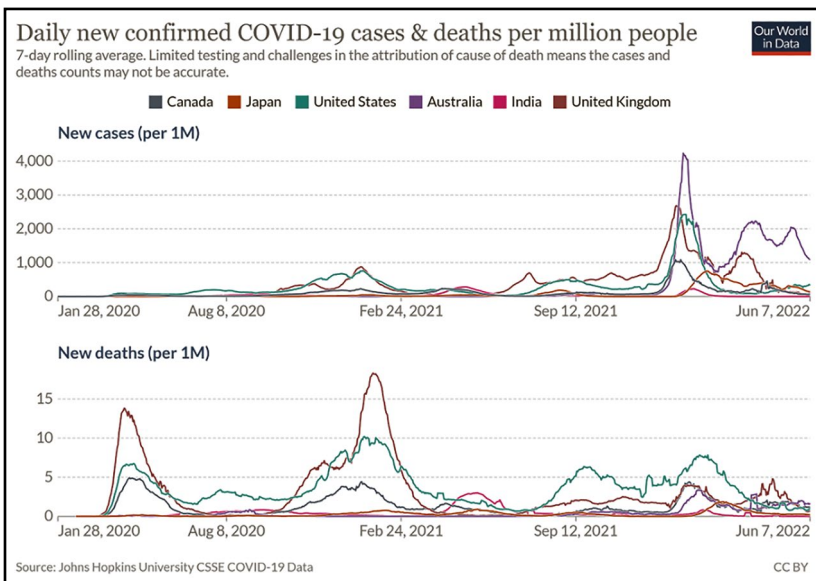


Figure 1. Daily New Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Deaths Per Million People. Source: Our World in Data, Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data. Creative Commons (CC BY 4.0) chart.

In addition, complex participant and interviewer schedules challenged our efforts to get all community parties on a single remote session. For example, we shifted in July and September to recording individual subjects separately for research on the Nashville and Los Angeles ecosystems. For other cities, we stopped scheduling sessions after attempts dragged out past our planned scheduling window.

As a result of these challenges, the results reflect the smaller samples taken, which don't include the full spectrum of stakeholders we wanted. We also had concentrations in our groups of one to three people who may have come from similar perspectives or areas. All three subjects in Northwest Arkansas, for example, worked with CACHE (Creative Arkansas Community Hub & Exchange), financed by the Walton Foundation, and had similar overall points of view. Similarly, the New Orleans panelists were recruited by one of the participants and were working together in the New Orleans Music Economy Initiative (NOME). These local change agents were on the ground level and shared strong examples and viewpoints. Future research can go beyond these design constraints and expand to additional and diverse voices within the different geographies.

Breakdown of Event and Regional Session Subjects by Geographic Region

The subjects who spoke at the conference and/or regional sessions lived in 15 countries and represented strong concentrations. 94 of the 128 subjects (73.4%) lived in the United States. The next largest concentrations are 4 Indian and 4 U.K. subjects. Broader continent-level concentrations are shown in Table 3.

Continent	Speakers	Percent
North America (2)	101	79%
Europe (7)	14	11%
Africa and Middle East (2)	2	2%
Australia (1)	3	2%
Asia (3)	8	6%
Total	128	100%

Table 3. Subject and speaker breakout by continent.

Though 24 U.S. states are represented in the sessions, we have high concentrations from Southern California (32% of U.S. subjects) and Colorado (15% of U.S. subjects), due in part to recruitment by our two principals. All of the California subjects were from the greater Los Angeles region. Further breakouts are detailed in the endnotes.⁹

Concentrations and Multiple Job Roles

Most of our local music industry participants held multiple roles in the music industry and related fields. We identified the primary job roles that our participants stated in their correspondence with us and in public

documents. We had strong representation from academia and education (30), government and policy organizations (17), and trade associations (15), with lighter-than-target representation from venues, festivals, and artists as the primary role (7).¹⁰ Many participants maintained three to five roles and represented sectors including government, artist, educator, trade association, marketing, managing, venue operation, radio, consultant, and service functions.

We had few speakers from large companies, despite their dominant footprints across the local music and digital music sectors across the world. This was both intentional and accidental—guests from large organizations who we did invite did not want to speak on the record.

Research Design and Analysis Tools

Team members from the conference and podcasts recorded the sessions as both audio and video remotely with Zoom. We transcribed the audio recordings with Otter.ai, an AI-driven transcription and collaboration online service.¹¹ We reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy of both word choice and speaker identification, which was very strong with the exception of proper nouns. As a tool to assist us in analyzing these unstructured transcription texts, we used MAXQDA, a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) product.¹² We used MAXQDS to code word and pattern repetition, which helped us identify, track, code, and search stories, names, phrases, and themes. From repeated exposure to the actual recordings, playback as media, coding, reading, and tracking stories told by participants, we chunked the narratives into core themes and patterns, as well as pulled out central comments to illustrate these themes.

Word and Concept Frequency

Word frequency analysis is a search and recall tool helpful for researchers to confirm and illustrate repeating patterns and social norms in subjects' stories. Certain phrases showed up much more frequently than others and tied in with the main themes that surfaced.¹³ *Change, support, government, and creative/creativity* were top subjects throughout most of the sessions. *Hope, opportunity, and related phrases* were strongly represented. Of note, music creators were frequently spoken of as *musicians* (119 mentions) or *artists* (719 mentions). *Songwriters* (21 mentions), *performers* (9 mentions), *engineers* (12 mentions), and other roles were dis-

cussed with less frequency but in a context that they should be included in regional solutions as well. *Venues* (424) and *festivals* (127) were mentioned frequently in policy, anecdotes, and other examples. *Education* had been a topic in many of the pre-COVID-19 studies mentioned above and was mentioned in 24 of the 35 conversations. It may have been greater due to the strong representation of educators in our participants. *Streaming* was mentioned in 25 sessions and is a recurring element in themes below.

Themes and Threads: Challenges and Solutions

Using the quantitative analysis tools to affirm frequency and patterns and then connecting those elements, we recognized broader insights. We found shared stories and types of narratives, threads of newer stories and patterns that were emerging at that time in the pandemic, and sometimes missing stories that no one mentioned.

Five core themes repeated in multiple sessions and were intertwined with most of the narratives:

- Local and Global Change and Disruption
- Government Response and Relations
- Emergent Organizing
- New Opportunities
- Digital Acceleration

We expand on these themes below in general order of frequency of comments, though not specifically in order of importance or impact. From the thirty-five sessions overall, we found many elements of similarities and differences intertwining with these five themes. We will highlight discoveries from the themes and detail differences and similarities between the geographic sessions.

Theme: Local and Global Change and Disruption

It was no surprise that nearly all participants spoke of change, disruption, uncertainty, and local impacts on many facets of their music communities. We heard less about those financial elements and more about the systemic damage to each region's core business elements.

For most music community members, much of their income stems from live performance. Where lockdowns and forced closures led to venue closures and show postponements, this was particularly devastating. Colorado's state music ambassador Stephen Brackett talked about the al-

ternatives he and others were forced to explore when they “slow[ed] the machine down,” adding that “our industry is built on momentum.” Given the increased long-term planning for touring and festivals in recent years, the uncertainty of when borders would open or what densities would be allowed at what times also disrupted contracts and revenue shares. This was an issue for musicians as well. Australia, Canada, and Japan were impacted by border closings eliminating travel for touring as well as export markets for their artists that connect with touring.

The live music disruption wasn't merely an issue for musicians and promoters. Reid Wick, a New Orleans-based musician and Membership & Industry Relations representative for the Recording Academy, added a reminder in our conversation that, “It's an invisible industry in a lot of ways because everybody can identify with the person on the stage... what they don't realize is that for that one person on the stage, there may be one hundred people behind the scenes that are making that show happen.” Chris Cobb, president of Nashville's Music Venue Alliance, observed the longer-term effect of the sudden shifts, mentioning that “we saw a lot of folks move on, we've seen some folks who still live here, but just didn't want to come back. And we've seen some folks who came back and then decided that they didn't want to stay.” He saw the situation as confounding, adding that “we're paying more than we used to, than we did pre-pandemic, and we still got folks who just said, you know, this isn't for me anymore.”

Indeed, the change and disruption in live music had been felt throughout the various music ecosystems. For example, Amit Gurbaxani, a journalist who covers the Indian music industry, stated that “it's like the movie *Groundhog Day*... [doing] the same thing over and over again.” He also called it the “new abnormal.” Our Indian panelists anticipated continued waves of opening and closing and conflicting and/or shifting approaches. Festivals were not coming back quickly, yet raves requiring masks were happening, but they were serving drinks. No social distancing was really happening. They mentioned artists they work with doing events despite a call for no underground events until the pandemic had subsided.

In addition to the local consumer draw to music-related gatherings, communities like New Orleans and Nashville had been known for the tourism industry that intertwined deeply with their music businesses. In fact, one of our Nashville subjects noted that it was difficult to get the local government to pay attention to the arts as other than a resource for tourism.

They referred to the “Tennessee on Me” program, initiated by the governor in July 2021, which essentially paid for people to come to Tennessee as tourists.¹⁴ The Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation had also established a local grant program and a local music streaming series that paid non-musicians who worked on it. In our New Orleans session Reid Wick mentioned, regarding tourism, that the pandemic had “really shined a spotlight on how important music is to that part of the economy.”

It is worth noting some panelists felt in many ways that pre-COVID-19 challenges in their ecosystem still existed or may have even been exacerbated. For example, Chris Zacher, at the time the Executive Director of Levitt Pavilion in Denver, Colorado, said that “There was a large set of challenges that existed for us pre-COVID[-19]. You know, the main ones are development, gentrification, rising rents, rising cost of living. These are major issues that were affecting us all, pre-COVID[-19]. Unfortunately, we saw an acceleration of many of those issues during COVID[-19], while the creative working-class communities were fighting to survive, those factors that were already negatively impacting our communities were able to thrive. And so that’s a major, major issue going forward.”

Theme: Government Response and Relations

Most of the pre-COVID-19 regional research reports cited minimal or thin support or safety nets from local governments in the United States. The pandemic became a stress test of those structures and relationships. While in some cases prior structures and lobbying had existed, as they did in the U.K. and with many grant structures in Canada, other government parties became the subject during the crisis. Government response and support ranged from payments for venues, payments for jobs, and payments of insurance to almost no support at all. Several of our subjects offered particularly notable comments on their situation.

Some regions lacked government support overall. Subjects in our India research made no references to any type of support from national government or trade organizations. Ben Johnson, who then was Performing Arts Director for the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, shared comments on a lack of city government support, a continuing challenge of a city with “one mayor and fifteen mini-mayors.”

Other government entities stepped up in specific ways to support specific sectors and parties. Facing extensive lobbying efforts, in Decem-

ber of 2020 both houses of the United States Congress had passed the Save Our Stages Act to support venues as part of a \$900 billion relief package.¹⁵ Tak Umezawa, chairperson of the innovation center CIC Japan, shared that there was a Tokyo government response to support music venues up to \$15,000 per month, which helped small restaurants and venues but initially was not enough to support large clubs, though the Tokyo Metropolitan Government amended the program. He said during our interview that the Industry Association of Music Clubs was lobbying for more support. Another panelist in our Japan session, however, was critical of the fact that there was support for certain genres of government-approved export music, like anime, but not for the rest of music.

In the U.K., policy relationships prior to the pandemic made an easier path to better government support in the crisis. Mark Davyd, CEO of Music Venue Trust, discussed how his organization “had already been working with (the) government in the U.K. for six years. So, when this came along, that was the basis of a conversation in place. It wasn’t quite as difficult for the government to understand what the challenges and what the problems might be. We did have a body of evidence about the economic impacts and the number of jobs, the likely outcome of...the closure of these venues not just for themselves, but on their local economies.”

Theme: Emergent Organizing

In addition to government responses, national and local music leaders in many music communities stepped up during the pandemic. They utilized existing organizations and established new ones to build scale and voice to seek funding relief from national and regional governments. Additionally, these sector-leading organizations provided information and support for each other as stresses and uncertainties continued. In the United States, a new organization called NIVA (National Independent Venue Association) successfully brought together more than two thousand venues to conduct research, lobby Congress with musicians and community members, and secure the Save Our Stages Grant also known as the Shattered Venue Operators Grant (SVO).¹⁶

NIVA launched quickly from extended personal social networks. Chris Cobb from Nashville shared NIVA’s starting point: “So, you know, I got a text last March from Dayna Frank that said, ‘Hey, you need to jump on this town hall this Thursday that Marauder is hosting.’ Now, this was a week into the pandemic, right? And, and so I did...and NIVA was formed

very quickly out of those weekly town halls.” Participants in the sessions also led or were engaged with several of NIVA’s regional chapters, including the Colorado Independent Venue Association, Washington Nightlife Music Association, and Music Venue Alliance Nashville. These entities continue to provide regional leadership and collaboration.

Some activism stemmed from certain geographic communities, and groups benefited from preexisting organizations. The Music Venue Trust in the U.K. and Vibe Lab based out of Berlin would be two such examples. The Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation had already been speaking with GNO (Economic Development for Greater New Orleans) and all three of our participants from the NOLA session were actively involved in NOME (the New Orleans Music Economy Initiative), already working together in 2018, prior to the pandemic.¹⁷ European communities had also previously created Music Moves Europe starting in 2015, as noted by Shain Shapiro from the Center for Music Ecosystems.¹⁸

Theme: New Opportunities

New opportunities were mentioned in 33 of the 35 focus groups from the conference and regional sessions. Many of the regional music ecosystems were enhanced by a combination of virtual events and new streaming opportunities in production, education, distribution, social media, influencer work, and more. Innovative local performance popups, already popular pre-pandemic, have become like the ghost kitchens and food trucks, at times both connecting the community and creating new competition for existing venues and their fan bases. After lockdowns, live music producers shifted into outdoor venues for dining and community music. There had been a proliferation of livestreamed performances within online platforms built to support them as well as throughout social media networks. In our conversation with Chris Cobb, a venue owner in Nashville, he even referred to a streaming series that he and others developed in conjunction with the Nashville Convention and Visitors Corporation. He recalled that they had streamed around fifty shows from fifteen venues, with two or three bands playing each show.

Sometimes our subjects mentioned observations that they didn’t necessarily consider a trend at the time but were worth noting as a possibility. Australian Leanne de Souza, co-owner of Nightlife Music and Chair at Electronic Music Conference said that, “Anecdotally, both as a consumer and talking to managers and promoters...punters are happily paying 20 or

30% more in the ticket price, and they weren't pre-COVID[-19]...if that becomes that we've added some value to that live experience, because it was taken away that'll be really interesting. And if managers and booking agents etc., can hold their own on their pricing, I think that will be a trend."

Another observed trend involved an increased focus and accelerated learning curve for lesser-known artists to distribute content online. Combined with shifts in consumer entertainment, this trend connected artists with democratization of access and selection for consumers. For example, Ritnika Nayan from CD Baby and Downtown Music India, shared that in her country, "Everybody started recording music, and everybody started releasing music. So that was great. The other side of it was that India is ruled by Bollywood, and the majority of our music comes from Bollywood, you know, like 90% comes from Bollywood and regional film music. Because of the lockdown, there were no films coming out. And because of that, independent artists who were releasing music got to, you know, kind of shine, they got to be placed on playlists, because they weren't competing with Bollywood anymore...it was a blessing in disguise."

Theme: Digital Acceleration and Connectivity

The drastic increase in digital content availability to which Ms. Nayan referred relates to another observed theme. Production and distribution of music using at-home digital audio workstations, as well as time to create, caused a boom in sales of instruments and digital music. She confirmed that sales of digital tracks in India increased 600% during the first year of the pandemic.

In addition to the increased volume of new distributed digital content, the shift to virtual connectivity to replace in-person music activities impacted communities in different ways. Music education, as one example, shifted quickly to online tools and became a new source of revenue for now-home artists. Though some educators stated challenges, during one of our April 2021 sessions, California-based composer Richard Niles noted that online instruction "kind of concentrates your mind on the screen and you're now talking to somebody, and they feel it, especially with private teaching online. They feel very free to talk about their attitudes and their own personal view. So, I think this is all a very interesting area." Many creators took the time to learn new digital skills, spend time with new audiences in virtual and social media arenas, and build that influencer base into new fans in different geographies or with new brand partners.

Conclusion

At the time of this writing, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact local music ecosystems with uncertainty, closed businesses, job changes, new competitors, and shifts in creator and fan behavior. While we of course know more now than we did in early 2020, new revelations certainly lie ahead. This research has resulted in an archiving and recognition of stories and emerging themes from one year into the pandemic. Recordings shared and contrasted how community leaders saw and coped with the new realities of their music ecosystems, built on top of regional pre-pandemic challenges. Geographical and cultural contrasts, by their nature, will continue to impact how each region's systems and policies respond to COVID-19 spikes, variants, etc., as we observed in our conversations. As the pandemic continues, research of this type surely must as well.

Regional leaders still need data and recognition of “silver linings” in the ongoing transformation and to look to each other for support and inspiration, as was noted in many of the NIVA-related conversations. Almost all of our participating regions, for example, seemed to look to other cities (e.g., Austin, Texas, which was repeatedly mentioned) as an aspiration and model for change and policy.

Though efforts grew to connect ideas, build new organizations, and patch some safety nets, lingering pre-pandemic problems continue and remain to be solved. Diversity, equity, and inclusion in music communities remain systemic challenges. Professional development for local musicians may now be more visible but remains a gap in many regions. Social safety nets—noted as missing or weak in pre-pandemic research reports—proved to be needed and fragile in both our sessions and in much of the other research and reports since. The challenges identified in pre-pandemic regional music ecosystems received a jolt—and in most cases funding—and remain to be built upon in continuing recovery around the world.

Further Research

We shared 128 stories from front-line music change agents from a stress test to local music globally, one year into the pandemic in 2021. Now, in 2022, we encourage future researchers to connect these 2021 stories and themes with pre- and post-pandemic reports, events, and narratives, to explore the impacts on individual geographic areas and emerging trends. With more hindsight, future researchers can explore the effectiveness and longevity of these changes and shifts. They also can drill down

into other regions and compare results based on actions and activism in different communities. In addition, regional leaders can work with these narratives and shared stories from other cities to build new support systems and compare ideas between regions, continuing some of the work that stemmed from connections at both Amplify Music conferences in 2020 and 2021.

We have made the focus group recordings and other materials from 2020 and 2021 available for student and academic researchers through the program website, YouTube, and podcast releases. As part of the process of using these materials with music industry students for classes and independent studies, we worked with a graduate intern who built a “how to” guide for student researchers to explore their music ecosystem and reach out to experts and leaders. The authors can make this how-to guide, transcripts, and summaries of publicly available regional economic and COVID-19 data from seven countries available upon request.

In Thanks

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Endnotes

1. Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>.
2. Storm Gloor, “Amplifying Music: A Gathering of Perspectives on the Resilience of Live Music in Communities during the Early Stages of the COVID-19 Era,” *Journal of the Music and Entertainment Industry Educators Association* 20, no. 1: 13-43, <https://doi.org/10.25101/20.1>.
3. Dave Brooks, “Everything You Need to Know About How—And When—Concerts Will Return,” *Billboard*, April 1, 2021, <https://www.billboard.com/pro/live-music-concerts-return-guide-faq/>. Also Callie Ahlgrim, “Every Tour, Concert, and Music Festival That’s Been Canceled or Postponed Due to the Coronavirus Outbreak,” *Insider*, April 1, 2020, <https://www.insider.com/music-events-festivals-tours-concerts-canceled-postponed-coronavirus-2020-3>.
4. Johns Hopkins.
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7. For example, in May 2022, concerts were canceled due to illness by Pearl Jam in Sacramento and Las Vegas (Glenn Rowley, “Pearl Jam Cancels Shows in Sacramento & Las Vegas due to COVID-19,” *Billboard*, May 18, 2022, <https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/pearl-jam-cancels-sacramento-las-vegas-concerts-covid-1235073100/>).
8. We have assembled a more complete list of music ecosystem literature at <https://bit.ly/music-scenes-grid>.
9. State representation by study subjects:

U.S. State	Number of Subjects	Percentage of U.S. Subjects
California	30	32%
Colorado	14	15%
New York	8	9%
Louisiana	7	7%
Tennessee	5	5%
Washington, DC	4	4%
Arkansas	3	3%
Texas	3	3%
16 More States	20	
Total	94	

10. Primary job roles of subjects in additional detail:

Primary Role	Number of Subjects
Academic	20
Government and Policy	17
Trade Association/Conference	15
Education	10
Consultancy	9
Technology Company	9
Venue/Festivals/Events	7
Health and Wellness	6
Nonprofit/NGO	6
Manager	5
Artist	4
Journalist	4
Radio	4
Marketing	3
Researcher	2
Service Provider	2
A&R	1
Label	1
Lawyer	1
Licensing	1
Performing Rights Organization	1

11. Otter.ai (<https://otter.ai>) is a speech-to-text transcription and translation application that uses artificial intelligence and machine learning. Otter.ai also captions for live speakers and generates written transcriptions of the speeches. We instead used its features to upload session recordings and separate speakers by voice identification, as well as import into MaxQDA's document workflow.
12. Researchers around the world use MAXQDA (<https://www.maxqda.com/>) from Verbi Software for qualitative and mixed methods research data management, excerpting/coding, and analysis. MAXQDA was created in the 1980s and is used by thousands of researchers in more than 150 countries.

13. Additional detail on frequency of phrases by mentions and by session:

Word(s)	Mentions	Sessions
Artist	719	34
City, Cities	471	30
Year	455	35
Venue	424	33
Community	416	35
COVID or Pandemic	284	35
Chang-	230	35
Support	227	32
Opportunit-	191	33
Govern-	199	26
Creativ-	175	32
Organization	170	28
Stream-	161	25
Open	159	29
Cultur-	146	27
Federal, National	136	29
Local	136	28
Festival	127	25
Hope	126	31
Musician	119	30
Last/Past Year	118	32
Educat-	114	24
History or Past	108	32

14. Tennessee on Me program, <https://www.visitmusiccity.com/tennesseonme>.
15. Save our Stages Act, <https://liveforlivemusic.com/news/save-our-stages-act-passed-congress/>.
16. Ibid. The SOS grant became the Shuttered Venue Operator Grant Program, administered by the U.S. Small Business Association.
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18. Music Moves Europe, <https://www.emc-imc.org/cultural-policy/music-moves-europe/>.

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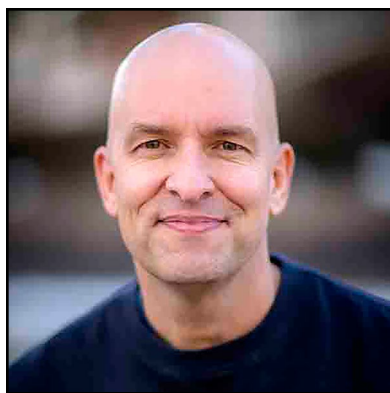
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Life Goes On: How BTS has Turned Virtual Live Concerts During the COVID-19 Pandemic into Showbiz Dynamite

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the live concert industry to a near halt and led many performing artists to rethink the way they connect with their audiences. One effort to continue performing despite pandemic-related restrictions was to shift live performances to virtual streaming and bring the live concert experience directly to fans' living rooms. However, little is known about the determinants of virtual live concert (VLC) satisfaction. This study aims to identify which factors constitute audience satisfaction with VLCs and to examine the importance of each element. A total of 533 participants who attended BTS's *Map of the Soul ON:E* concert in 2020 were recruited to investigate their VLC satisfaction. The results of confirmatory factor analysis show that three dimensions—artist, audio quality, and virtual stage appearance—constructed the concept of VLC satisfaction. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) also revealed that video device type and previous live concert experiences were significant factors for VLC satisfaction, but not audio device type. In addition, celebrity identity and celebrity attitude were significantly and positively related to audiences' satisfaction with VLC. The outcome of this study demonstrates the opportunities of VLC as an alternative and expanded media channel of audience engagement.

Keywords: virtual concerts, online concerts, fans, BTS, COVID-19

Do virtual live concerts (VLC) provide the same exhilarating experiences as those attended in-person? This question has become increasingly common due to the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shutdown of the live entertainment industry. Gone were the days of singing along with droves of fans in a packed arena while watching favorite artists perform live in front of thousands of spectators, at least for the time being. As artists across genres and fan bases had to pivot from performing live to strengthening their online presence, many turned to virtual performances. Entrepreneurial businesses popped up and pushed forward many alternative methods for artists to reach their fans through VLCs, ranging from ticketing software specializing in live streamed events (e.g., TicketSpice) to online platforms such as VenewLive, which assists with providing virtual production services and digital fan experiences.

For artists who already had a mass following, fans had been clamoring for an opportunity to experience a live show, even if it meant doing so from the comfort of their couch with a smart device in hand. Major acts, such as the South Korean boy band BTS, streamed two live concerts in October 2020 titled *Map of the Soul ON:E*. The livestreams, which drew nearly one million viewers from 191 regions, provided a possible blueprint for livestreaming large-scale productions to fans around the world. The two performances also brought in at least \$35 million in ticket sales (Stassen 2020), proving that a pivot to virtual concerts was not only prescient but also profitable. On December 31, 2020, Justin Bieber performed a livestreamed New Year's Eve concert sponsored by wireless provider T-Mobile titled "T-Mobile Presents New Year's Eve Live with Justin Bieber," with two subsequent streams of the show later in January (Lovece 2020). Other performances have ranged from pop to rock, country to global music, where major and minor musical acts joined the online virtual concert platforms to livestream performances at a fixed ticket price (Horn et al. 2020).

The expectation was that live concerts would slowly ramp back up over the next few years. However, the widespread availability of technology capable of providing a holistic, live, remote-viewing experience, coupled with the ability to instantly access content from anywhere, meant that there were unprecedented opportunities for artists to reach more fans than ever (Charron 2017). Giving fans more flexibility and options to virtually view their favorite artists live in concert was simultaneously creating ad-

ditional revenue streams for artists that, if capitalized upon, could outlast the pandemic and shape the future of the music industry.

Existing research gives us an understanding of and a methodology for measuring live concert satisfaction (e.g., Brown and Knox 2017; Hausman 2011; Minor et al. 2004). Through multiple attributes that are inherent to in-person live concert experiences, we can measure satisfaction using metrics such as physical surroundings (Bitner 1992; Grove et al. 1992) and social interaction (Burland and Pitts 2016), as well as sound quality and the artist themselves (Minor et al. 2004). However, we do not yet possess a framework for measuring VLC satisfaction, given this performance model's variation from traditional live concert experiences. Therefore, the purpose of this study is first to identify the conceptual dimensions of VLC satisfaction by examining relevant factors such as artists, audio quality, and virtual stage quality. Unlike a conventional live concert experience that is driven by multi-sensory elements available at the venue (Zaltman 2003), VLC experience is limited to fewer senses because of this lack of a venue setting. However, VLC satisfaction may still be composed of multiple domains of visual and auditory cues and audiences' psychological connection with the artists. This study explores a less comprehensive version of configuration for VLC satisfaction based upon Minor et al. (2004) and Hausman's (2011) concert satisfaction models.

In addition to testing the structural significance of the VLC satisfaction measure, each dimension (i.e., artist, audio, and video) was further analyzed in regard to VLC watching environments. A VLC diverges from traditional concerts by removing complete control over the experience from the artist and placing it into the audience members' hands (e.g., the experience for someone who attends a virtual event via a laptop versus that of someone who watches on a projector with a stereo system). Hence, it was necessary to investigate how the audio and video settings as well as audiences' existing feelings toward the artists affect overall satisfaction with VLC.

Theoretical Framework

Determinants of Live Concert Satisfaction

While the development and consumption of digital music are substantial in enriching consumer experience, attending a live concert remains an irreplaceable experience (Holt 2010). Live performances in various

venues have formed the foundation of live entertainment and social interaction as vital culture in the U.S. (Minor et al. 2004). Live concerts are complex cultural phenomena that involve a combination of art, economics, ritual, and pleasure (Shuker 2008), and such service products should be treated as a multi-dimensional construct when examining how consumers perceive the quality of their experience (Minor et al. 2004).

It is evident that perceptions of service quality are based on multiple dimensions, and numerous studies have been conducted to determine service quality and consumer satisfaction. For example, Grove et al. (1992) define service experience as a mixture of four components: 1) actors who contribute to the service, 2) audiences, 3) physical surroundings, and 4) the service product itself. Rust and Oliver (1994) then assert what, how, and where the service is delivered are the initiatives to customer satisfaction. Brady and Cronin (2001) take a similar approach of having three primary dimensions of service quality: 1) functional quality (how the service is delivered), 2) physical environment quality (where the service is delivered), and 3) outcome quality (what is delivered). While the number of service quality dimensions can vary from two (e.g., Mels et al. 1997) to as many as ten (e.g., Parasuraman et al. 1985), the perceived service quality can be defined by consumers based on an evaluation of multiple dimensions, assessments of which are eventually combined to induce an overall service quality perception (Cronin and Taylor 1992).

Minor et al. (2004) put previous literature together and developed a model that demonstrates how audiences perceive the service quality of live concerts, which is mainly based on a theory by Grove et al. in 1992. The model indicates that consumers evaluate live performances as the sum of multiple features, including components of the performance and the settings of venues. Specifically, there are five attributes that establish the overall satisfaction of live performances: 1) artist, 2) sound quality, 3) stage appearance, 4) facilities, and 5) social interaction. Based upon Minor et al.'s study, Hausman (2011) empirically tested a multi-attribute satisfaction model across various types of music and venues in which she organized a more compact structure with four attributes: 1) artist, 2) musical environment, 3) venue settings, and 4) audience interaction.

The performers or musicians are the focal point of an event, significantly contributing to the perception of the consumer experience in both audio and visual aspects (Minor et al. 2004). The acoustic performances by musicians drive event experience satisfaction and, additionally, the

physical charm of the performers affects how consumers appraise both the performers and the performance (Landy and Sigall 1974). Therefore, Minor et al. (2004) argue that an artist's image is measured by the two facets of musical performance and physical appearance. Hausman (2011) then contends sound quality has a two-fold nature that impacts both the musician's performance as well as the technical aspects of the venue (i.e., sound quality and sound volume). Thus, she combined the human sound factor (musical performance) and the technical side of sound experience together to create the "musical environment" dimension. Regarding the venue settings, both studies relied upon Bitner's (1992) servicescape framework to investigate the effects of physical surroundings such as the seating, parking, and audience density on satisfaction. These physical components produce value for consumers both functionally and emotionally (Berry et al. 2002). Lastly, audience interaction, the effective enjoyment of being an audience member (Hausman 2011), includes audience density, enthusiasm, and social compatibility. Overall, previous studies imply that live concert satisfaction is composed of the integration of multi-sensory perception in a holistic manner (Holbrook and Anand 1990; Morin et al. 2007).

Advent of VLC and Satisfaction Factors

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) engendered severe financial issues in diverse industries. In accordance with Maslow's hierarchy of needs, consumer demand for safety and health is more imperative than social interaction during the pandemic (Hagerty and Williams 2020). Consequently, the demand for live entertainment-related businesses contracted dramatically and, more seriously, the concert industry was forced to shut down at the outset of the pandemic. Meanwhile, concert promoters and booking agents lost their jobs, venues went unoccupied, and musicians faced problematic circumstances where their most reliable income source was no longer available. In fact, the year 2020 saw the concert business lose \$9.7 billion globally in ticket sales alone, with another \$30 billion lost in other streams of revenue such as sponsorships, merchandise, and concessions (Pollstar 2020).

Many industry professionals sought ways to reach out to audiences in the living room amid COVID-19 because the sustainability of the live concert business, which relies heavily on live tours, was currently not feasible. Subsequently, the pandemic forced the entertainment industry to redefine the definition of live concerts from in-person events to online streaming

performances. As individuals adjusted to the new “normal” of life under self-quarantine, several artists and musical organizations took their shows online to deliver musical pleasure to weary fans who fervently desired performances from their favorite artists. For example, South Korean boy band BTS and its label, Big Hit Entertainment, offered a live-streamed concert, *Map of the Soul ON:E*, in October 2020. The event was hugely successful, attracting 993,000 viewers from 191 regions, according to Big Hit (Stassen 2020). This new concept of a “virtual live concert” may sound contradictory, but such a notion drew noticeable attention as COVID-19 stalled the comeback of live music. After seeing the great success of several VLCs such as those performed by BTS, it is hard to imagine that musical institutions will not attempt other alternatives as there appears to be significant demand for virtual shows.

While the concept of VLC is seemingly intuitive, this new type of “live” concert is still in an embryonic stage. The current literature provides limited insight into customers’ expectations and satisfaction in virtual performances. Minor et al. (2004) and Hausmann’s (2011) satisfaction models are certainly enlightening to understanding audience behavior, but the discrepancy between in-person and virtual events hinders practitioners from optimizing the event experience. Live entertainment allows audiences to immerse themselves in the musical performance with the physical and social environment where multi-sensory stimuli, including all five senses, are applied (Lee et al. 2012). Hence, the total experience of a concert will be driven not only by the artists but also by subconscious sensory elements available at the venue (Zaltman 2003). On the other hand, VLC experience may confine the audience experience into fewer senses as it lacks the venue settings. Among the identified components of satisfaction (i.e., artist, audio, venue setting, and social interaction), venue-related services (e.g., seating quality or concession food), and social interaction are not available in VLC. However, VLC satisfaction still consists of multiple domains of visual and auditory cues. The emotional connection with the artists can also play into the determination of VLC satisfaction. Therefore, this study explores how VLC satisfaction is structured; in other words, the possibility of a more condensed version of the configuration for satisfaction—with artist, sound, and video—was examined based upon Minor et al. and Hausman’s concert satisfaction models. The following sections provide the conceptual background and justification for each dimension of VLC satisfaction.

Effects of Celebrity Identity and Celebrity Attitude on VLC Satisfaction

Understanding the relationship between consumers and artists is crucial to explicate the attributional process of consumer satisfaction. Audience members in a VLC may feel they are directly tied to the performer, which enables them to identify with the artist. This concept of celebrity identification is multifaceted in nature and has two aspects (Soukup 2006). On the one hand, event attendees assume the artist's identity, goals, and perspective, creating a psychological connection (Cohen 2001; Eyal and Rubin 2003). In addition to such a vicarious experience, the identification process is also associated with other ritualized fans to foster a sense of belonging in a group (Benson and Brown 2002; Harwood 1999). The latter type of identification, a communal identification process, is depicted as "fandom" (Harris and Alexander 1998). The unique experience of being a member of a fan community creates the momentum to consume celebrity-related products. Accordingly, Fiske (1992) argues that highly identified fans are not just consumers but proactive and knowledgeable producers of "cultural economy."

One common suggestion made by researchers is that identification is an essential factor underlying the change of attitude and behavior (Um 2013). Media researchers have examined the role of identification in media usage. For example, forming identification with a media character leads to a sense of gratification (Perse 1990; Rubin and Step 2000). Johnson (2005) also suggests that fans who strongly identify with a celebrity are less likely to respond negatively to the celebrity's immoral behavior than those who are weakly identified with the celebrity. Moreover, her study shows highly identified fans are prone to feel proud of being a fan. These outcomes propose that the extent to which consumers identify with a celebrity positively induces consumer attitude and behavior. As such, fans who have a high level of identity are more likely to have a positive attitude toward artists either by creating a parasocial connection with the artists or having a sense of belonging in a fan group. Thus, the authors put forward this hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Celebrity identity will positively affect celebrity attitude.

Audiences who have a feeling of adoration toward artists may have a bias to positively evaluate the artists' performance (Landy and Sigall 1974). For many decades, psychologists have examined the impact of atti-

tude on future behavior, and Glasman and Albarracín's (2006) meta-analysis demonstrates much evidence that existing positive attitudes are likely to engender satisfaction. Hence, another hypothesis is posited.

Hypothesis 2: Celebrity attitude will positively affect VLC satisfaction.

Impacts of Audio and Video Settings on the overall VLC Satisfaction

Unlike live concerts, VLC audiences are able to control their listening environment with a variety of choices of playback systems (e.g., headphones, built-in speakers, or stereo systems). Prior literature has shown that individuals' reactions to auditory stimuli are dissimilar based on the type of audio device they use (Zelechowska et al. 2020). Such experiential differences have been demonstrated with several experimental studies. For instance, Schmidt-Nielsen and Everett (1982) uncovered that minor fluctuations of speech pitch were more easily detected with headphones than speakers. Regarding attitude and attention, Kallinen and Ravaja (2007) showed that using headphones overall was more likely to draw listeners' attention and elicit positive responses to news information than using speakers. However, participants who scored high on sociability and activity personality scales presented a high level of attention with speakers. Kallinen and Ravaja's study suggests the possibility of differences in speech perception from different playback devices and, further, that these differences may vary depending upon personality traits.

In the case of music perception, Koehl et al. (2011) examined whether different playback tools (i.e., speakers and headphones) can be used on equal terms to evaluate differences between auditory stimuli. The study demonstrated that the participants could distinguish the types of musical contents equally well with both speakers and headphones. However, the participants in the headphones condition showed a higher level of preference for one type of recording. Another experimental study by Woods et al. (2017) demonstrated that headphones, which reduce external noise dramatically, enhanced the control over the quality of the auditory stimulus. Headphones, however, may create an unusual listening environment for live performance considering live events are accompanied by significant background noise. Moreover, headphones may lead to a more tiresome experience than speakers (Zelechowska et al. 2020) due to the close proximity to the sound source.

In conclusion, the review of studies comparing the experience of using different playback methods showed that perceived sound experience is not identical with choice of audio devices. Similarly, VLC audiences can show distinctive responses and have dissimilar experiences depending on the type of playback device they use. Hence, the authors suggest the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Participants will show a different level of satisfaction depending on the audio device used to attend the VLC.

When it comes to the sense of sight, unlike conventional live concerts where audiences freely explore and set eyes on the physical settings, virtual audiences' visual exposure is confined to the screen. Hence, it is not unreasonable to assume that the visual setting of a VLC (e.g., size of the display or type of device) would be the critical determinant of sight perception. According to Skalski and Whitbred (2010), media forms such as screen sizes, viewing angles, fidelity, and resolutions construct significant psychological effects on visual perception. Scholars have particularly paid attention to the effect of screen size on consumer experience among many features of media, as a large body of work in the field of media communication has consistently demonstrated the positive association between increases in screen size and immersion, enjoyment, and realism (Hou et al. 2012; Kim and Sundar 2013).

Much empirical evidence supports the assertion that screen size affects an audience's arousal (Grabe et al. 1999; Lombard et al. 2000). Moreover, in Lombard and Ditton's experiment on viewers' evaluation of a television broadcast in 1997, participants showed a significantly more positive attitude toward both the performers on the media and the viewing environment in the large screen condition. Increases in screen size may induce immersion or realism (Kim and Sundar 2013) through which the screen conveys the "live environment" or audiences take pleasure in a simulated "being-there" experience. In conclusion, viewers' emotional responses are significantly affected by screen size. To extend this line of scholarly research to the VLC context, this study seeks to examine whether screen size is still a significant factor in audience satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is forwarded:

Hypothesis 4: Participants will show a different level of satisfaction depending on the video device used to attend the VLC.

Expectancy Disconfirmation and VLC Experience

Previous experiences shape the image of service or products, and that pre-conceptualization is known to affect consumers' future experience (Spreng and Page 2003). According to Oliver (1980), individuals compare their original expectations and the actual product or service performance. This post-purchase evaluation is jointly determined by expectation and disconfirmation. The concept of disconfirmation is the gap between a pre-purchase and actual performance that leads to either positive or negative disconfirmation (Spreng and Page 2003). The positive expectation disconfirmation (i.e., the post-experience exceeding the original expectation) is believed to enhance consumer satisfaction (Bhattacharjee 2001).

In the live event setting, facility aesthetics, lighting, and service staff directly influence the atmospheric determinants that are associated with audiences' memory and conceptualization of the event experience (Ryu and Han 2011). That sort of created image may function for event attendees to evaluate their future behavior, resulting in expectancy disconfirmation. Such a difference in pre-post perception depends on the existence of previous experience. For instance, fans who have previous experience of live concerts may have a better understanding of the sensory scene of a live event than those who have never attended a concert event. Accordingly, regular concertgoers are more likely to perceive a discrepancy with their existing memory when attending a VLC. Due to the semantic similarity, or the way VLCs are promoted as "live concerts," ticket buyers might expect to enjoy the authentic concert feeling in a VLC; however, VLC settings are limited to a streaming experience, and thus disconfirmation may occur. On the other hand, without having prior concert experience, attendees could have a lower level of perceived disconfirmation because of the absence of preexisting bias. From the predictive capability of expectancy disconfirmation, it is possible to presume that there are different levels of disconfirmation on the basis of fans' prior experience. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 5: Participants who have a prior in-person concert experience will show a higher level of expectation disconfirmation with a VLC than those who do not have in-person concert experience.

Furthermore, given the current VLC setting that lacks key attributes only available in a live concert, VLC attendees' expectation disconfirma-

tion may adversely affect satisfaction (Bhattacharjee 2001), and therefore, the authors advance this hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Participants who have a prior in-person concert experience will show a lower level of satisfaction with the VLC than those who do not have in-person concert experience.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

A total of 533 participants were recruited in South Korea by a consumer experience management company. Individuals who purchased a ticket and attended BTS's *Map of the Soul ON:E* concert in 2020 were eligible to participate in the study. A stratified-sampling technique was implemented to examine the impact of previous live concert experience on VLC satisfaction, in which 272 participants (group I) had an experience of a live concert, and the other 261 (group II) did not have a previous live experience at a physical venue. Participants who agreed to join in the study were asked to fill out an online questionnaire. In order to minimize the time effect that could potentially distort participants' memory about the event, all of the participants were given the questionnaire within five days from the end of the concert. Several responses were eliminated due to the lack of actual attendance of the online performance or late/no response. 250 participants in group I completed the questionnaire, and 250 usable surveys were collected in group II. Those who successfully completed the questionnaire received US\$3 as compensation. In the final sample of 500 participants, the age breakdown was 2% (under 18), 23% (18 to 29), 36% (30 to 39), 23% (40 to 49), and 16% (50 or over). 41% of the sample was male.

Measures

An online questionnaire was designed to measure multiple constructs including celebrity attitude, celebrity identity, VLC satisfaction, behavioral intention, and VLC expectation disconfirmation. Participants' attitude toward the celebrity was measured with the celebrity attitude scale (6-items) developed by Maltby et al. (2006). Celebrity identity was measured with the 5-item scale from a previous study (Rubin and McHugh 1987). VLC satisfaction was first measured with a modified version of Minor et al.'s (2004) multi-dimensional concert satisfaction scale to define

the domains of the new construct. Then, Oliver’s (1980) satisfaction scale was used to measure the overall satisfaction of VLC. Behavioral intention was measured with two items by Boulding et al. (1993). Participants rated each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) with higher values indicating more positive responses to each item. VLC expectation disconfirmation was measured with a single item (Westbrook and Oliver 1991) ranging from 1 (*very different from expected*) to 5 (*not at all different from expected*) to evaluate how discrepant participants’ prior expectation and post-experience of the virtual concert were. Additionally, participants were asked to answer what type of audio (i.e., Bluetooth speaker, built-in speaker, headphones, or stereo system) and video devices (i.e., mobile, laptop, less than 40-inch TV, 40-59-inch TV, 60-99-inch TV, or larger than 100-inch projector) they used to watch the VLC in order to test the effects of the auditory and visual settings on overall VLC satisfaction. Items of the measures, reliability scores, mean values, and standard deviations are demonstrated in Table 1.

An English version of the questionnaire was first developed, and a rigorous translation procedure recommended by Douglas and Craig (2007) was adopted to determine the equivalence of the original and Korean versions of the questionnaire. The English version of the items was translated into Korean by one of the authors of this study. The content equivalence and relevance of the items were established through discussions with bilingual colleagues in the United States. The Korean translation was then translated back into English by a second bilingual translator and compared to the original version. The Korean translation was examined and revised multiple times in response to the previous content analysis and back-translation, and both translators accepted the final version.

Table 1. Summary of measures:

Measures	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach’s α
Celebrity Identity _a	I like BTS.	5.96	1.00	$\alpha = .886$
	I can easily relate to BTS.	4.94	1.31	
	I think of BTS as a good friend.	5.38	1.17	
	I have no doubt BTS and I would work well together.	5.25	1.25	
	BTS is a personal role model.	4.85	1.46	
	(Based on Rubin and McHugh 1987; Rubin et al. 1985)			

Measures	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Celebrity Attitude _a	I love to talk with others who admire BTS.	5.43	1.15	$\alpha = .916$
	Keeping up with news about BTS is an entertaining pastime.	5.70	1.17	
	It is enjoyable just to be with others who like BTS.	5.50	1.15	
	I enjoy watching, reading, or listening to BTS because it means a good time.	5.87	1.07	
	Learning the life story of BTS is a lot of fun.	5.53	1.13	
	My friends and I like to discuss what BTS has done.	5.49	1.19	
	<i>(Based on Maltby et al. 2006)</i>			
Overall VLC Satisfaction _a	I was satisfied with my decision to attend this VLC.	5.80	.97	$\alpha = .908$
	My choice to attend this VLC was a wise one.	5.59	1.04	
	I think that I did the right thing when I decided to attend this VLC.	5.68	1.00	
	I truly enjoyed this VLC.	5.89	.96	
	I was satisfied with my overall experience with this VLC.	5.88	.98	
	<i>(Based on Mitchell and Olson 2000)</i>			
VLC Satisfaction _a	I was satisfied with BTS's ability in this VLC.	5.93	.96	See the results of CFA in Table 2 for reliability of the measures.
	I enjoyed BTS's creativity in this VLC.	5.95	.94	
	I was satisfied with BTS's movements during this VLC.	6.17	.97	
	I liked BTS's physical appearance in this VLC.	5.60	1.06	
	BTS's clothing in this VLC was visually appealing.	5.78	1.04	
	The overall sound quality of this VLC was satisfactory.	5.68	.99	
	I was satisfied with the overall sound volume of this VLC.	5.69	.98	
	I enjoyed musical contents played during this VLC.	5.66	.96	
	The lighting effects of the virtual stage was satisfactory.	5.77	.96	
	I enjoyed the decoration of the virtual stage.	5.79	.97	
	I liked how the virtual stage was visually designed.	5.75	.98	

Measures	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Behavioral Intention _a	I am likely to attend a VLC similar to this one.	5.61	1.17	$\alpha = .792$
	I am likely to recommend this VLC. (Based on Boulding et al. 1993)	5.59	1.07	
VLC Expectation Disconfirmation _b	How do you evaluate your experience with this VLC compared to your expectation? (Based on Westbrook and Oliver 1991)	3.86	.87	–
^a Items measured using a 7-point Likert-type (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). ^b Items measured using a 5-point semantic differential scale (1=not at all different from expected, 5=very different from expected).				

Table 1. Summary of measures.

Statistical Analysis

Based on the guideline by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in RStudio to identify VLC satisfaction's conceptual dimensions and evaluate the caliber of the factor structure. In addition to statistically testing the significance of the CFA model, criterion-related validity of the VLC satisfaction scale was also tested by examining the scale's associations with external variables (i.e., celebrity identity, celebrity attitude, and behavioral intention) within a structural model. In the structural model, the three latent factors (i.e., artist, audio quality, virtual stage appearance) of the VLC satisfaction merged into a latent satisfaction variable, creating a second-order structure. Awang (2012) recommends testing a hierarchical model as the multi-order structure is more parsimonious and constrained than a first-order model. Once the factor structure of VLC satisfaction had been confirmed, one-way ANCOVA was conducted three times to further determine how audio and video settings, as well as the existence of attendees' prior experience of a live concert, influenced the overall VLC satisfaction.

Results

Testing Multi-dimensionality of VLC Satisfaction

The major purpose of CFA was to deliver evidence of whether multiple items of each latent factor demonstrate a satisfactory fit to the data. As shown in Table 2, the chi-square statistics for the model was significant ($\chi^2/df = 75.747/38, p < .001$), yet the value was less than three times the

degrees of freedom, indicating the model fit was acceptable (Schermelleh-Engel et al. 2003). Other widely used fit indices (CFI = .993; AGFI = .952; RMSEA = .045; SRMR = .024) also revealed a good model fit (Hu and Bentler 1999). Considering factor loadings, all scale items loaded highly on their matching factors ranged from .704 to .863, and their accompanying test statistics were all highly significant ($p < .001$). The results also presented no high cross-loadings based on the modification indices. In addition, the composite reliability scores of factors were all greater than .8, which indicated the items had satisfactory internal consistency (Raykov 1997). Therefore, the CFA model was satisfactory enough to confirm the three dimensions of VLC satisfaction. The reliability and validity were further examined in the next validation stage.

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	AGFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Three Factor Model	75.747***	38	.993	.905	.45	.24
Factors	Items	Standardized Loading	Composite Reliability	AVE		
Artist	Artist1	.771***	.856	.543		
	Artist2	.718***				
	Artist3	.759***				
	Artist4	.704***				
	Artist5	.729***				
Audio Quality	Audio1	.861***	.887	.723		
	Audio2	.863***				
	Audio3	.827***				
Virtual Stage Appearance	Video1	.780***	.800	.572		
	Video2	.779***				
	Video3	.708***				
Note: CFI = Comparative Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual. *** $p < .001$.						

Table 2. Results of confirmatory factor analysis ($N = 500$).

The average variance extracted (AVE) from each factor was computed to bring a more rigorous analysis of the internal structure and test convergent validity of the measures. A score of .5 indicates an acceptable level of AVE (Fornell and Larcker 1981), and all values presented in Table 2 satisfy this criterion. Discriminant validity was then tested with the pro-

cedure guided by Fornell and Larcker. The AVE of a construct should be higher than the squared correlation between the construct and other constructs in the model (Barclay et al. 1995). Table 3 presents the squared inter-construct correlations with the AVE scores on the diagonal. Discriminant validity was achieved as all the diagonal components are greater than the associated off-diagonal scores. A series of analyses indicated that the measure of VLC satisfaction was reliable and valid.

	Artist	Audio Quality	Virtual Stage Appearance
Artist	.543		
Audio Quality	.220	.723	
Virtual Stage Appearance	.319	.600	.572
Note: The average variance extracted from each construct is shown on the diagonal. Off-diagonal values are squared construct correlations.			

Table 3. Results of discriminant validity test.

To measure criterion-related validity, a structural model was examined, in which the second-order latent factor of satisfaction was included to test how participants' overall satisfaction with the VLC was associated with external variables (i.e., celebrity identity, celebrity attitude, and behavioral intention). According to the aforementioned fit indices, the structural model illustrated in Figure 1 showed an acceptable fit ($\chi^2/df = 962.954/243$; CFI = .932; TLI = .922; RMSEA = .077; SRMR = .070). The path coefficient from celebrity identity to celebrity attitude was significant and positive (standardized coefficient = .881, $p < .001$) to the extent that celebrity identity explained 78% of the variance in celebrity attitude. The path coefficient from celebrity attitude to VLC satisfaction was also positive and significant (standardized coefficient = .754, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the path coefficient from VLC satisfaction to behavioral intention was significant and positive (standardized coefficient = .877, $p < .001$) indicating that 77% of the variance in behavioral intention was explained by VLC satisfaction. The relationships among these variables were consistent with the authors' theoretical prediction, providing evidence in support of Hypotheses 1 and 2. Overall, the VLC satisfaction measure offered evidence of validity.

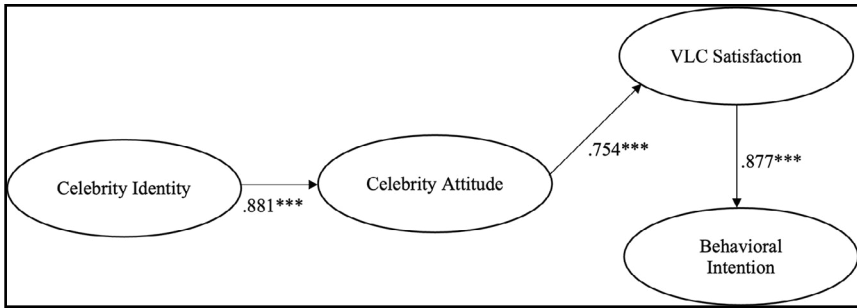


Figure 1. Structural model for testing criterion-related validity of VLC satisfaction (***) $p < .001$.

Effects of Audio Device and Screen Size, Celebrity Identity and Attitude, and Prior Concert Experience on Overall VLC Satisfaction

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted three times to test the effects of prior concert experience (dichotomous), audio device (four categories), and video device (six categories) on the overall satisfaction of VLC. Factorial ANCOVA was not a viable option due to the violation of unequal sample size and variances among categorized groups when all three factors were included. Having both unequal sample sizes and variances significantly weakens statistical power and raises Type I error rates (Rusticus and Lovato 2014), and thus multiple times of ANCOVA analyses were employed separately. The averaged scores of celebrity attitude ($\alpha = .916$) and celebrity identity ($\alpha = .886$) were used as covariates in order to examine the pure effects of the independent variables controlling for the covariates, those which were determined to be impactful from the previous SEM analysis. The averaged value of overall satisfaction ($\alpha = .908$) was used as the dependent variable in all three analyses. The results of ANCOVA analyses are presented in Table 4.

The first ANCOVA test was for the impact of audio device type on overall satisfaction. A preliminary evaluation of homogeneity of regression slopes showed that the mean differences among the four groups were approximately equal throughout the range of celebrity attitude ($F(3, 488) = 1.05, p = .37$) and celebrity identity ($F(3, 488) = 1.96, p = .12$), and thus the assumption was not violated. The result of the first ANCOVA model was significant ($F(5, 494) = 116.40, p < .001, \eta^2 = .54$), but the effect of audio type on overall satisfaction was not statistically significant

	SS	df	MS	F	η^2
Model 1_a					
Main Effect					
Audio Device _b	2.23	3	20.65	1.73	.01
Covariate					
Celebrity Identity	20.65	1	20.65	52.82***	.10
Celebrity Attitude	26.19	1	26.19	66.99***	.12
Model 2_a					
Main Effect					
Video device _c	5.128	5	1.025	2.66*	.03
Covariate					
Celebrity Identity	19.32	1	19.32	50.02***	.09
Celebrity Attitude	24.42	1	24.42	63.22***	.11
Model 3_a					
Main Effect					
Prior Experience _d	7.22	1	7.22	19.06***	.04
Covariate					
Celebrity Identity	18.29	1	18.29	48.26***	.09
Celebrity Attitude	24.42	1	24.42	64.44***	.12
<p>^a Homogeneity of regression for covariates tested and not significant. ^b Four categories: Bluetooth speaker, built-in speaker, headphones, and stereo system. ^c Six categories: mobile, laptop, less than 40-inch TV, 40-59-inch TV, 60-99-inch TV, or larger than 100-inch projector. ^d Two types: with prior concert experience and without previous concert experience. * $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.</p>					

Table 4. Results of ANCOVA analyses for VLC satisfaction.

($F(3, 494) = 1.73, p = .16$) controlling for the effect of covariates. Both celebrity attitude and celebrity identity were significantly related to overall satisfaction in the model ($F(1, 494) = 66.99, p < .001$; $F(1, 494) = 52.82, p < .001$). Based on the results, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

The second ANCOVA was performed to test the effect of video type on overall satisfaction. The test of homogeneity of regression slopes indicated that the relationship between the covariates and the dependent variable did not differ significantly across the video types ($F(5, 482) = 1.06,$

$p = .38$; $F(5, 482) = 1.34$, $p = .25$). The ANCOVA model was significant ($F(7, 492) = 85.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .55$), and the effect of video type on overall satisfaction was statistically significant ($F(5, 492) = 2.66$, $p < .05$) controlling for the effect of covariates. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported. Pairwise comparisons using the Holm-Bonferroni method were further conducted to assess the differences among the groups, controlling for type I errors. There were group differences ($ps < .05$) in the adjusted mean between the laptop group ($M = 5.72$) and the small TV group ($M = 5.36$), and the projector group ($M = 5.88$) and the small TV group. Both covariates were significantly associated with overall satisfaction in the model ($F(1, 492) = 63.23$, $p < .001$; $F(1, 492) = 50.02$, $p < .001$).

The third ANCOVA test was conducted to assess the effect of prior concert experience on overall satisfaction. The test of homogeneity of regression slopes presented that the relationship between the covariates and overall satisfaction was not significantly different between the two groups so that the assumption was not violated ($F(1, 494) = 3.45$, $p = .64$; $F(1, 494) = 2.18$, $p = .14$). The result of the final ANCOVA model was significant ($F(3, 496) = 204.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .55$), and the effect of prior concert experience on overall satisfaction was statistically significant ($F(1, 496) = 19.06$, $p < .001$) controlling for the effect of covariates. Group I (without prior concert experience) had a smaller adjusted mean ($M = 5.52$) than group II ($M = 5.77$), and also, both covariates were significantly related to overall satisfaction ($F(1, 496) = 64.44$, $p < .001$; $F(1, 496) = 48.26$, $p < .001$). Moreover, the results from an independent samples t -test indicated that participants in Group II ($M = 3.75$, $SD = .85$, $N = 250$) scored lower on expectation disconfirmation than those in Group I ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .87$, $N = 250$), $t(17) = 2.79$, $p < .01$, two-tailed. Based on these findings, there is evidence to support Hypotheses 5 and 6.

Discussion

This study identifies and analyzes three dimensions of Virtual Live Concert satisfaction in order to ascertain the utility of this model and whether VLCs have post-pandemic potential for artists as an additional means of engaging with audiences and generating new revenue streams. Those three factors are: 1) artist (i.e., the key attributes of performers that audiences are satisfied with); 2) audio quality, which is determined by the audiences' subjective perception of the audio production quality; and 3) virtual stage appearance, as determined by the visual attractiveness of the

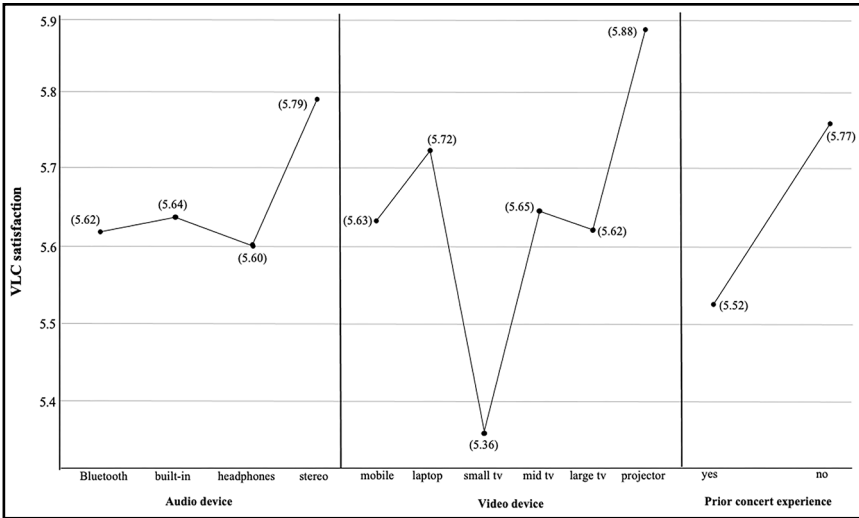


Figure 2. Main effects of audio device, video device, and prior concert experience on VLC satisfaction.

event on the screen. Given the differences between VLC and in-person concerts, a new model was needed to evaluate consumer satisfaction and, statistically, the results of this study support the proposed three-factor structure for determining VLC satisfaction (see Figure 2).

Despite the demonstration of a slightly higher preference for in-person events (among the participants who reported a previous in-person concert experience), VLCs are inherently different from live concerts and their necessity has been driven by extraordinary circumstances that have prevented live concerts from happening. This natural difference necessitates and allows for a standalone framework to measure and understand VLC satisfaction given the absence of traditional determinants such as facility services (e.g., venue and concessions) and social interaction and engagement. The results of this study validate the efficacy and usefulness of the proposed model for evaluating VLC satisfaction. Further, they show that taking these satisfaction factors into consideration when planning a VLC makes it a valid entertainment and performance option for many artists to attract and grow audiences around the world even after the pandemic.

The research supports Hypothesis 1, which posits that celebrity identity (i.e., how much participants personally identify with the artist) will positively affect participants' attitude toward the artist. Virtual celebrity-

fan interactions often have the ability to create a sense of intimacy and authenticity (Click et al. 2013). Based on participants' responses to the online questionnaire gauging their level of identification with BTS, a positive correlation between celebrity identity and VLC satisfaction is evident. Thus, fans who identify closely with an artist are more likely to have a positive attitude toward the artist.

Similarly, the research strongly supports the second hypothesis, which asserts that the audiences' attitude toward the celebrity will positively affect VLC satisfaction. As borne out by the research, audience members who already possess positive feelings or attitudes towards an artist are more likely to be satisfied by a VLC experience, as it appears they may have a bias to positively evaluate the artist's performance (Landy and Sigall 1974). This study supports the supposition that existing positive attitudes are likely to engender satisfaction (Glasman and Albarraacín 2006). Furthermore, research indicates that celebrities who use virtual platforms to engage with their fans generate higher levels of attachment among those fans. (Krause et al. 2018). Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 work in conjunction to demonstrate that the strength of an audience member's identification with an artist informs their attitude toward the artist, and that attitude is a strong predictor of VLC satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3 assumed that participants would show a different level of satisfaction based on the audio device they used when attending the VLC. This assertion was not supported, meaning that the level of satisfaction was not dependent on the type of audio device or the resultant audio quality. This could be due to the fact that participants did not use the same quality audio devices, which could have created inconsistencies that distorted the information. Further, audience members likely opted to use the best device they had available to them personally, thus making their audio experience subjectively satisfactory. Variations in participants' satisfaction based on audio device were minimal, regardless of whether a participant used a Bluetooth speaker, built-in speakers, headphones, or a stereo system; however, participants with a dedicated stereo system did show the highest level of satisfaction. This outcome is undoubtedly a positive one for artists and performers since the audio device that an audience member uses to listen to the concert is one aspect of a VLC that is simply out of the artist's control. While audio quality is an important (some might say the most important) aspect of a live performance, audiences likely understand that the audio experience for a VLC cannot mirror that of an in-person

concert, and they will consequently filter that aspect out of a determination of their satisfaction with the VLC.

Video type, as posited by Hypothesis 4, did affect VLC satisfaction, with participants exhibiting differing levels of satisfaction based on how they viewed the VLC. Participants who viewed the concert on a small TV reported the lowest levels of satisfaction, and those who viewed the concert on a projector reported the highest levels of satisfaction. Studies have demonstrated that screen size significantly affects the perceptions of mobile internet users (Chae and Kim 2007). Those who viewed the concert on a mobile device, a mid-sized TV, or a large TV all reported similar levels of satisfaction that fell within the range between viewers using a small TV and those using a projector. Because increases in screen size can translate to a feeling of immersion or realism, a larger screen size is likely the optimal way to view a VLC because it provides an audience member with the closest approximation of the live environment. Engaging with virtual environments through a larger screen has been shown to produce higher feelings of both physical and self-presence (Hou, Nam, Peng, and Lee 2012). Given that a virtual audience's visual exposure is confined to the scope of the camera that is recording the VLC, a larger field of view more closely replicates the freedom of an audience member to visually explore the concert setting.

Hypothesis 5 propounds that participants who have a prior in-person concert experience will show a higher level of negative expectation confirmation with a VLC than those without such experience. Disconfirmation is the gap between pre-purchase and actual consumption that leads to either positive or negative disconfirmation (Spreng and Page 2003), and positive expectation disconfirmation is believed to enhance consumer satisfaction (Bhattacharjee 2001). Questionnaire responses supported the assertion of Hypothesis 5, bearing out the assumption that participants with prior in-person concert experience demonstrated a higher level of negative expectation disconfirmation. This is likely due to a level of expectation held by those participants that was based on their in-person experiences, as well as a bias toward believing a VLC would not be as good as an in-person concert. Audience members with prior concert experience were more likely to experience negative expectation disconfirmation with the VLC because their expectation for a virtual show is inherently reduced against what their expectation would be for an in-person show.

Building from that idea, Hypothesis 6 was also supported in its assertion that these participants with prior in-person concert experience would demonstrate a lower level of satisfaction with the VLC than those without in-person concert experience. Because a VLC inherently lacks certain key attributes of a live show that are only available in-person, participants with previous in-person concert experience (i.e., those with a higher level of negative expectation disconfirmation) showed a lower level of satisfaction with the VLC than those without such previous experience.

This dimension of VLC satisfaction is significant, not only for the purposes of this study, but also for contributing an additional framework through which to test the theory of expectancy disconfirmation. Testing this theory in the context of VLCs serves to mutually reinforce the underpinnings of both the theory and this study. This is because: 1) the study provides a new field in which to test expectation disconfirmation, demonstrating the concept's utility when applied to the subject of VLCs; and 2) the theory serves to support the conclusions of this study, demonstrating both the reliability of the concept and its usefulness in determining VLC satisfaction.

Overall, participants showed a higher level of satisfaction with in-person concerts. This is understandable given certain factors that are inherent to a live, in-person concert that are simply unattainable in the VLC format (e.g., immersion and a sense of community). However, the difference in satisfaction levels, while observable, was not outstanding. Thus, VLCs can still be a valid and viable entertainment format to attract audiences, even after the pandemic.

Examples such as BTS and others demonstrate the potential for an artist to reach audiences through a VLC that far surpasses the capacity of a traditional event venue or concert space. In addition to generating a new revenue stream for artists that they can layer onto or incorporate into traditional live concerts, the VLC provides an opportunity for artists to expand their reach and grow their audiences around the world. This study demonstrates the value of the live concert, and it draws attention to the opportunities that capitalizing on this new concert format can create for artists in a post-pandemic world.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has a few limitations to be acknowledged. First, the current study explored the impacts of sound quality on satisfaction by exam-

ining different types of audio devices. It measured the overall sound quality based on the participants' perception, which did not comprehensively investigate the objective quality of the audio. Thus, future research may inspect the technical side of the produced sound in order to measure the sound quality objectively. Moreover, an experimental setup may be necessary to control for the quality of video settings. Screen size is known to be the most impactful element (Kim and Sundar 2013), but other factors, such as screen resolution and fidelity, could be further evaluated. Network connection stability might also be an element to be included in a future study. Overall, there are numerous other attributes that may also affect audiences' VLC satisfaction to be explored further.

Second, while this study rigorously inspected how celebrity identity and attitude affect VLC satisfaction, the level of those two constructs in the data set were high, and thus the impact of low identity was not fully captured from this research setting. Hence, it might be a good idea to examine another VLC that has a broader spectrum of celebrity identity and attitude. Specifically, a future study may perform a group comparison to investigate how the different levels of the two constructs (e.g., median split of low and high) could affect VLC experience.

Third, the identified three-factor model of VLC satisfaction was adapted from existing scales created for live concert satisfaction. The social interaction dimension was dropped in the model considering the uniqueness of the VLC in this study. Nevertheless, audience interaction was available during the VLC, even though highly limited to simple chatting. Audiences may still want to have social interaction as the psychological connection is one of the most impactful elements of a concert experience (Earl 2000). Future research, therefore, should test whether emotional interaction within audiences is still possible in a virtual format or, if available, compare the extent of audience interaction between live and virtual performances.

Lastly, this study cannot be applied conclusively to all entertainment events as the sample of the study was limited to South Korean participants. To be able to generalize the findings of this study, similar studies can be replicated with a broader group of participants.

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Exploring Political Communication Through Strategic Artist-Candidate Relationships: The Case of a Southern Political-Celebrity Nexus in the 1976 Presidential Election

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to offer insight into strategic relationships between U.S. presidential candidates and music artists and to understand the meanings of such relationships in the context of political communication. Through an analysis of U.S. media sources, archival documents, and interview data, this study investigates music industry involvement in the 1976 presidential campaign. Specifically, this study examines Jimmy Carter's mutually-beneficial relationship with music artist Charlie Daniels via Phil Walden, the founder of Capricorn Records. The findings show Southernness as an overall theme: Both Carter and Daniels shared an affinity for Southern music, language, religion, and pride. Motivated by Carter's honesty in the aftermath of a credibility gap, Daniels performed campaign fundraising concerts that, in conjunction with the candidate's relationship with other artists and music executives such as Walden, exposed a new brand of political-celebrity nexus.

Keywords: political communication, music, Jimmy Carter, Charlie Daniels, Phil Walden

Music and, thus, musicians have been part of the U.S. political soundscape for centuries. The 2016 and 2020 presidential elections were no different as musical artists voiced respect and disdain for candidates, endorsed candidates, appeared with candidates, and performed their music in support of candidates.¹ Musical artists offered a variety of rationalizations for political endorsements, from policy-based issues to unconventional motivations. For example, Kid Rock chose Donald Trump since the candidate will “run the country like a business,” 50 Cent selected Hillary Clinton for reasons associated with Bill Clinton’s “lust factor” and “her seeing past that,” and Joe Biden called upon the long-time champion of Democratic candidates Bruce Springsteen, who offered up “My Hometown” to endorse the Scranton, Pennsylvania native.²

While the fusion of politics and music in the United States emerged as early as George Washington’s presidency, musicians initially composed songs for inaugural festivities, not campaign activities. Technological advances and social movements’ use of music, however, changed such traditions, and a steady progression of integrating music emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout the 1800s, presidential candidates campaigned with patriotic songs, and a trend developed in which candidates commissioned musicians to write songs praising their candidacy and maligning other candidates. Broadcast communication via radio and television in the 1900s increased the demand for campaign songs. In the 1930s, presidential candidates began to use popular songs on the campaign trail; this practice became more common in the 1970s and persists today.³ The 1976 Jimmy Carter presidential campaign is a context worthy of investigation for two reasons.

First, the 1970s was an interesting decade for U.S. culture, particularly the music scene. Originating in the 1950s and developing in the 1960s, rock and roll more closely aligned with political activism in the 1970s. Thus, rock music and politics mixed to an unprecedented degree.⁴ Furthermore, the 1970s was an era of artist experimentation with new genres and subgenres, including Southern rock musicians who played country-tinged rock music while flaunting their Southern heritage.⁵ The 1970s also brought artists such as John Denver and Barbara Mandrell who blurred the lines between pop and country music.

Second, the 1970s was an interesting decade for U.S. politics, socio-cultural conditions, and economics. Amid the Vietnam War and Watergate, journalists popularized the term “credibility gap” to describe the discrep-

ancy between politicians' discourse and reality.⁶ But in the 1976 election, former governor Carter from Georgia promised "a government as honest and decent and fair and competent and truthful and idealistic as are the American people."⁷ In the same decade, an admiration for the "Southern way of life" surfaced.⁸ Sunbelt economic opportunities and television portrayals of Southern family values initiated "redneck pride" with roots in country music.⁹ Magazine and newspaper journalists such as *Chicago Tribune* columnist Jack Hurst, television shows such as *The Dukes of Hazzard*, and Hollywood movies such as *Nashville* further contributed to Southern music's mainstream acceptance and enduring cultural appeal.¹⁰ Carter's election inaugurated a new view of the South as perceptions of the Southern "redneck" transformed from symbols of racial prejudice to those of the white working-class male.¹¹

Previous research has focused on political campaigns' use of music (lyrics, voice, instrumentation, performance, effects, etc.).¹² This present study investigates issues beyond the music itself with a twofold purpose. First, this study explores how U.S. presidential candidates and musical artists communicate to construct strategic relationships that generate a political-celebrity nexus. Second, this study examines the motivations for and the meanings of artist-candidate relationships. This study also addresses Moss' call for scholarship about the interconnectivity of cultural identity and political party identity in the South and the strategies employed to communicate about such identities.¹³ To examine the role of musical artists in presidential campaigns during an era of "the Southernization of American life," data specific to Carter's 1976 presidential campaign were collected from U.S. media, interview, and archival sources.¹⁴

Music as Communication in the Political Context

Philosophers have long recognized music as a communication medium. Plato argued for the persuasive nature of music, even warning about nefarious effects since music seems harmless.¹⁵ Wicke confirms that music conveys meaning with the power to "shape patterns of behavior imperceptibly over time."¹⁶ According to Rein, music may be the most influential art form with potential to alter individual and societal viewpoints since audiences rarely presume music to be persuasive and, thus, do not prepare "to counter arguments or to refute ideas, even if some were to be embedded or disguised in the song."¹⁷

Politicians are known to communicate with citizens through speeches, interviews, advertisements, debates, and social media.¹⁸ Music and politics have merged since the biblical times of Saul and David.¹⁹ Throughout U.S. history, political movements have used music as a “weapon.”²⁰ Political identities and images have been cultivated through policies, words, and appearances and through musical lyrics and sound, both instrumental and vocal.²¹ Music is an effective campaign tool since it appeals to voters’ emotions, projects desirable attitudes, and humanizes candidates.²²

Scholars have examined music as political communication in local and national campaigns, including the consequences of campaign music on a candidate’s image, the ideological nature of songs written for candidates, and the effects of music in advertisements on voter behaviors.²³ Outlining the historical use of music in presidential politics, Gromis references William Henry Harrison’s launching of the Golden Age of campaign songs and associations between musicians and John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, respectively.²⁴ Brownell chronicles the efforts of these showbiz-minded presidential candidates to capitalize on the endorsements and fundraising capabilities of popular musical celebrities such as Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack and Grand Ole Opry stars such as Merle Haggard, respectively.²⁵ Dewberry and Millen explore the campaign music of Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton.²⁶ Blankenship and Renard show an increase in the usage of popular music, particularly rock music, in campaigns since the 2004 U.S. presidential election.²⁷ The literature provides robust analyses of the musical activity surrounding the Barack Obama campaign and the music associated with the Trump and Hillary Clinton campaigns, respectively, in advertisements, playlists, and performances.²⁸

The aforementioned studies build upon the notion of music as a political tool. However, scholarship investigating the communication between U.S. presidential candidates and musical artists and the motivations for and the meanings of such artist-candidate relationships is sparse. Furthermore, there is little research focusing on Southern musicians’ support and music in campaigns. This study fills the gap in the literature by investigating the case of Carter’s 1976 presidential campaign, a campaign in which a Southern politician constructed relationships with a Southern record label executive and his acts in an era that redefined the “redneck” moniker.

Southern Music as “The Language of a Subculture”

Southern culture is one of the most identifiable among the subcultures in the United States. Music has been a constant, important presence in Southerners’ lives.²⁹ With Southern origins, country music and Southern rock are closely related genres. Malone asserts that the history of Southern rock music “cannot be separated from the evolution of country music” as both genres are “homegrown” with Southern rhetoric and symbols.³⁰ Scholars, journalists, and musicians converge on the idea that such music functions to communicate emotions associated with Southern ideologies, values, and hardships.

Gregory argues that country music, historically produced and consumed by the white working class, has been “the language of a subculture” throughout U.S. history.³¹ Malone concurs that “no genre of American music has been more intimately intertwined with the experience of working-class people.”³² Scherman claims that country music reflects “the vicissitudes of working class life,” and Grabe refers to the genre as “the white man’s blues.”³³ Artists such as Charlie Daniels and Hank Williams Jr., combined rock and country aspects in the 1970s while emphasizing Southern identities; Williams asserts that his music “gave a voice to people who had traditionally been ignored—even despised—the lower class southern white, the poor farmer, the wage earner, the working man, the God-fearing family man, the bell hop, the black field worker.”³⁴

In the 1970s, Carter, who was born and reared in Georgia, served as Georgia governor (1971-1975) and then as U.S. president (1977-1981). This decade coincides with the time frame in which music industry promotion and mainstream media attention amplified the national commercial appeal of Southern rock and country music. The Country Music Association and the Academy of Country Music showcased country music to national audiences, business developers marketed Opryland USA and the Grand Ole Opry as Nashville tourist destinations, and musicians from various stylistic backgrounds married country and rock music.³⁵ *Wanted: The Outlaws*, a 1976 compilation album featuring outlaw country, a blend of rock, folk, and country music, became the first platinum-certified country album.³⁶ While Music Row in Nashville remained a top recording center for country music as well as rhythm and blues, recording studios in other Southern cities thrived, including those in Memphis, Tennessee, and Muscle Shoals, Alabama, and another launched by Phil Walden in Macon, Georgia. Meanwhile, in the 1970s, print and broadcast journalists

and entertainment media portrayed Southern culture and country music in an increasingly favorable manner, and music publications such as *Creem*, *Crawdaddy*, *Rolling Stone*, *Music City News*, and *Country Music* reported on Southern rock artists.³⁷ By the 1980s, country music was the fastest-growing genre of popular music in the United States.³⁸

Analyzing the Case of Carter's 1976 Presidential Campaign

The literature review established the amalgamation of politics and music and the importance of Southern music as reflective of Southern culture. This present study draws upon literature about music as political communication to investigate musicians' support of a politician. If music in presidential campaigns is persuasive communication, then musicians are political communicators—and an understudied group of political communicators—who convey meaning through both musical performance and endorsement of politicians.³⁹ This study further considers literature about Southern culture to investigate the artist-politician relationship and the concurrent media coverage about such relationships within a Southern ideological framework. Considering Southern musicians publicly supported and then Americans elected the first post-reconstruction Southern president, the 1976 presidential campaign is an ideal case for examination. Furthermore, in 1974, federal campaign finance laws contributed to a new and vital form of political support—fundraising in the form of benefit concerts. During the 1976 campaign, journalists reported on Carter as one of the first and most successful at utilizing this resource. Thus, the purpose of this study is 1) to investigate how Carter and musicians communicated to construct strategic relationships and 2) to understand the motivations for and the meanings of such relationships in the context of political communication.

This study's theoretical approach centers on culture and ideology. Williams posits that culture is “a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behavior.”⁴⁰ According to Foss, “an ideology usually permeates everything produced in that culture or group, so its rhetorical artifacts—its works of art, religious practices, and institutions embody, enact, and express that ideology.”⁴¹ Hall contends that media are ideological tools that supply “images, concepts, and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand, and ‘make sense’ of some aspect of social existence.”⁴² McGee focuses on the

political realm and designates ideology as “political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior. Further, the political language which manifests ideology seems...composed of slogan-like terms signifying collective commitment.”⁴³

To examine the 1976 presidential campaign, particularly the ideology represented in Carter’s communication and relationships with Phil Walden, the founder of Capricorn Records, and the Charlie Daniels Band, we incorporated multiple data sources and established a chain of evidence. First, we collected data from the top six circulating U.S. newspapers since media are a primary information source for Americans, and, in 1976, most Americans read at least one newspaper a day.⁴⁴ According to the *Ayer Directory of Publications*, the top circulating U.S. newspapers in 1976 were the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Boston Globe*. Through a keyword search in the ProQuest Historical Newspaper database, we gathered relevant full-text articles published from December 1, 1974, to January 31, 1977, inclusive.⁴⁵ December 1974 was the starting point because this is the month Carter announced his candidacy for president. January 1977 was the ending point because this is the month of Carter’s inauguration. The search terms were “Jimmy Carter” and “country music” or “rock music” or “Southern rock” or “Capricorn” or “Phil Walden” or “Charlie Daniels.” The search resulted in 121 articles. Second, we analyzed archival documents culled from the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum in Atlanta, the University of Georgia in Athens, and the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville. We identified documents through archival finding aides and with archivists’ assistance. The documents included magazine and newspaper articles, news releases, administrative documents, and communication, including letters and memoranda describing activities of Carter, Walden, and Daniels during the 1976 presidential campaign. Third, Bier interviewed Daniels via telephone for nineteen minutes in July 2016, and Roessner interviewed Carter in Atlanta for thirty minutes in October 2014. Interview transcripts provided a deeper understanding of the motivations for constructing artist-candidate relationships and the meanings of these associations.

To probe the interview transcripts, archival documents, and newspaper articles in relation to their cultural and political contexts, we analyzed the data separately and then compared notes about emergent patterns and

themes via emails and in meetings. While engaging in extensive, repeated close readings of the data as suggested by Hall, we considered what the dataset revealed about how and why musicians and a politician communicated to cultivate mutually strategic relationships as well as media narratives about these relationships.⁴⁶ We selected representative examples of the themes that emerged in the data and interpreted how the dataset contributes to scholarly discussion about political communication and the meaning of artist-candidate relationships in presidential politics.

Findings

The overall theme in the data is Southernness. Jimmy Carter formed relationships with musicians with a Southern heritage and an overt display of Southern pride. Likewise, artists such as the Charlie Daniels Band supported Carter in part because of his Southern roots. Finally, journalists highlighted, sometimes in a stereotypical way through descriptions of appearance and through language (e.g., dropping the g at the end of words in headlines and articles), the Southernness of both Carter and the musicians with whom he associated.

The Beginning of the Relationship: “Jimmy Who?”

Phil Walden of Capricorn Records linked Carter to Southern musicians. Walden, a friend of Carter and an early supporter of his presidential candidacy, approached Daniels in October 1975 about publicly supporting Carter. At that time, Daniels hardly had heard of Jimmy Carter. Walden gave Daniels some literature to read about Carter and his policy positions and then Carter himself called Daniels on his birthday to ask for support.⁴⁷ Daniels agreed.⁴⁸

A December 4, 1975 *Rolling Stone* article confirms this account. Daniels had not yet agreed to perform on Carter’s behalf, but he told *Rolling Stone* reporter Art Harris about his decision to support the relatively unknown, anti-establishment candidate. “I knew he was governor of Georgia,” Daniels said, “but that didn’t cut no ice with me because I didn’t know where he stood. I didn’t want to back someone who was gonna say, ‘We’re gonna kill the n***** and burn down the synagogues’ and that kinda shit. So I asked for some material and [Capricorn] sent me a whole pile of stuff. I read it and now I’m pledging my whole support to Jimmy Carter. He speaks plain; I can understand what he’s talkin’ about. He

stands for change and we need a lot of fuckin' change. I damn sure can't get behind Ford or Wallace, so I'm going to get behind Jimmy Carter."⁴⁹

A 1996 Epic Records media kit offers additional insight into the origin of the relationship between Carter and Daniels: The media kit quotes Daniels as saying, "I didn't think he had a chance. When I was asked about doing something for him, he was 'Jimmy Who?' But he called me one night. I read some clips about him and I felt good about him. We'd come out of a catastrophic political time...Carter personified honesty and goodness."⁵⁰

During the campaign and directly after the election, however, Daniels made it clear to journalists that no one pressured him into supporting Carter, an allegation that some Capricorn Records acts, including the popular Marshall Tucker Band, had made as early as December 1975.⁵¹ For example, in regard to his support of Carter, Daniels told a reporter, "There ain't no son of uh, uh, gun gonna tell us what to do—We do what we want."⁵² Soon after Harris's piece was published, Daniels finalized arrangements to perform in concerts to raise money for the Carter campaign. Thereafter, journalists frequently aligned Carter and Daniels, for example, noting that Daniels spent most of his time either "hugging Jimmy Carter" or "play[ing] a wild fiddle."⁵³

Motivations for Supporting Carter

Prior to Daniels' support of Carter, many country artists supported conservative presidential candidates. In 1968, every major country artist who endorsed a candidate supported either George Wallace or Richard Nixon. Thus, by 1972, country music was aligned with the so-called "Silent Majority."⁵⁴ Daniels, however, was his own man both musically and politically. In the case of music, while many Southern rock musicians distinguished themselves from country artists, Daniels did not.⁵⁵ He blended traditional country instruments with rock sounds, and he associated with country artists such as Roy Acuff and Southern rock artists such as the Allman Brothers Band. In the same manner, Daniels defied the country music stereotype and chose his politicians according to his perceptions of honesty and a shared Southern heritage. "I don't look at what he says about issues and I don't think that 90 percent of the people out there do either," Daniels said of the fellow Southerner. "I just think he's an honest man."⁵⁶

Credibility Gap

Daniels supported Carter's candidacy for president because of the loss of trust in the U.S. government, also known as the credibility gap, and because "the United States was in dire need of someone who would tell us the truth, and Jimmy Carter was a man who would do that."⁵⁷ During the campaign and after the election, Daniels expressed his disdain for politics to various journalists. For example, Daniels told a reporter that he "hates politics."⁵⁸ Carter's image as an honest man motivated Daniels to become involved in the campaign, and he often noted that he did not expect anything in return for his support.⁵⁹

During the campaign, Daniels told the entertainment editor of the *Phoenix Gazette*, "I'd do anything for Jimmy Carter...He's my man. He's a good politician. He's honest. There aren't many of them."⁶⁰ But, despite his personal commitment to Carter, Daniels was not trying to persuade others to vote Carter, he noted time and again on the trail. "I'm not telling anybody to vote for Jimmy Carter," Daniels told a *Nashville Banner* reporter in 1976. "I'm just trying to raise some money for an honest politician."⁶¹ On another occasion, he offered more insight into his intent to Associated Press reporter Matt Yancey. "I ain't trying to get anybody to vote for Jimmy Carter or anybody else," he said. "He convinced me and all I'm trying to do is help him raise money to convince other people."⁶² Moreover, Daniels did not seek anything in return for his endorsement. "I look at this as my campaign contribution, and that's all it is," he explained to Yancey. "I probably won't see the man again if he's elected...and that's the way it should be. Presidents shouldn't owe anybody anything. I can say that, but General Motors and Standard Oil can't say that."⁶³

Daniels did see Carter after the election—he played at Carter's inauguration. He continued to assert his simple rationale for supporting his fellow Southerner, "I got involved for patriotic reasons...I tried to help get him elected because I thought he was a good man."⁶⁴ "Along comes old Jimmy Carter, from Plains, Georgia..." Daniels later explained to *Dixie Lullaby* author Mark Kemp, "and everybody, even if they didn't agree with his politics, at least knew he could be trusted. That was a big, big thing at the time. It was something this country desperately needed. And he brought that to the presidency."⁶⁵

Southern Identity

The Great Speckled Bird, the counterculture underground newspaper in Atlanta, identified the Southern connection between Carter and coun-

try music artists: “Like country music, Carter is clearly Southern based, yet has tremendous appeal for working people throughout the country.”⁶⁶ Carter, like Daniels, spoke the language of the working class, which appealed to the country music singer and many in his audiences. “I could understand what he was saying,” Daniels recalled, “He spoke my language. He was the man that America needed at the time; otherwise there is no way I would have done anything for him.”⁶⁷

Daniels’ support of Carter’s candidacy had less to do with politics and more to do with the two men’s shared Southern heritage. “With me, it’s always been about the United States of America,” Daniels said. “I don’t care if someone’s from Mars as long as he does a good job, but it didn’t hurt that [Carter] was from Georgia.”⁶⁸ This was a reality that journalists eventually observed, and they often included quotes that emphasized both men’s shared affinity for Southern religion, music, and pride.⁶⁹ For instance, a *Nashville Banner* article quoted Daniels as saying, “I’m not a Democrat. I’m not a Republican. I’m a musician and a Methodist.”⁷⁰ Even after his role in Carter’s campaign, Daniels reiterated his desire to keep out of politics. “We just represent music,” he told a reporter from the *News Herald* in Willoughby, Ohio.⁷¹

However, as Daniels told Yancey after a performance, mutual passions around music and faith transformed him from a reluctant supporter to a campaign fundraiser.⁷² Journalists often noted that both men listened to and chatted about country music and Southern rock.⁷³ “Whenever I see Carter, we talk about music. He listens to us,” Daniels said.⁷⁴ Carter was a big fan of Southern rock, particularly of the Charlie Daniels Band and the Allman Brothers Band, sounds that he and his advisors recognized had resonated with many of the nation’s young and working-class voters.

During the general-election campaign, Carter and his advisors incorporated music into his campaign events that highlighted his Southern heritage. For example, he adopted as his campaign theme Daniels’ hit song, “The South’s Gonna Do It, Again,” which dazzled audiences at the Sunshine Jam campaign fundraiser in June 1976.⁷⁵ The song lyrics summoned Southerners to “be proud you’re a rebel because the South’s gonna do it again.”

The Impact of Musicians' Campaign Support

Monetary Impact

In mid-May 1976, Carter introduced “one of [his] closest friends in the world, Charlie Daniels” to a Nashville crowd of about seven thousand young Southerners, reeking of marijuana, who jumped onto their chairs and started stomping as the Charlie Daniels Band broke into the “Tennessee Waltz.”⁷⁶ In that one performance, Daniels raised approximately \$25,000 for the candidate, and after collecting the names and addresses on the backs of tickets, the campaign estimated that they would collect more than \$20,000 from federal matching funds. As the Associated Press correspondent reported, this was the original formula that the Carter campaign had used to fund their primary campaign in the new age of federal campaign finance reform. When all was said and done, Daniels raised at least \$100,000 from his three benefit concerts for the Carter campaign before matching federal funds were added.⁷⁷

Gathering an Audience

In 1977, the *New York Times* music critic Robert Palmer credited Southern rock music with helping to “create the climate for Jimmy Carter.”⁷⁸ This was a fact that, even as a candidate, Carter never ceased to recognize. In May 1976, he explained to Associated Press reporter Matt Yancey that, “If it hadn’t been for people like [Daniels], I couldn’t have won any of the early primaries. I wouldn’t have had the money to finance my campaign.”⁷⁹ Daniels, however, was less quick to take credit for Carter’s success in the primary and general-election campaigns. “I am not a professional person who does politics. I don’t do that,” he said. “We drew some attention. People would listen when we played his rallies, but what we said made no difference—it was what he said.”⁸⁰

At times, however, concert audiences were uninterested in what Carter had to say. For example, on October 6, 1975, Carter appeared with the Allman Brothers Band in Atlanta. The audience did not share the Allman Brothers’ fondness for Carter and booed the candidate.⁸¹ “The experience made me not want to do it anymore,” Daniels said. “I support candidates, but I don’t do it in public. I’m patriotic about the proliferation of the American dream and about the well-being of the citizens of the United States of America [but] my patriotism does not lie in politics because politics change.”⁸²

A Musical Footnote

This political-celebrity nexus was largely overlooked in media coverage of the 1976 election. When reporting on the connection among Carter, Capricorn Records president Phil Walden and Southern rock bands such as the Allman Brothers Band and the Charlie Daniels Band, most political journalists only briefly mentioned that Walden and bands under his label had provided crucial, early financial aid in the form of benefit concerts; they focused instead on other topics and, thus, the connection was primarily a footnote in campaign coverage.⁸³ Political reporters were so involved with everyday campaign coverage that they largely overlooked the symbiotic connection between Carter and the music industry.

Discussion

Enduring Relationships

The relationships between Jimmy Carter and Charlie Daniels and the other Capricorn Records acts persisted beyond the November 1976 election. Some speculated that Daniels expected favors from Carter in relation to music industry regulations in return for his campaign help, but Daniels avowed, "I've done what I did as a private citizen and Carter's campaign was financed cleaner than anyone's. I don't want anything out of it except a good president and that's what he's gonna be."⁸⁴ Capricorn Records executive Phil Walden expressed similar sentiments publicly, swearing that he did not want a thing. Carter had ingratiated himself with Walden and his Capricorn Records act by pushing for a strict antipiracy bill as governor of Georgia, and Walden imagined that Carter would push for the implementation of similar measures as president. Moreover, Carter and his advisors hoped that Walden and other record executives would enlist their artists to engage in similar fundraising efforts for the Democratic party and his re-election campaign.⁸⁵

But, four years later, no such efforts materialized as Capricorn Records faced bankruptcy amid the decline in record sales that accompanied the recession of the late 1970s and as the Carter administration canceled all campaign appearances due to the unfolding Iranian Hostage Crisis. Though Carter's re-election campaign ended in failure, he nevertheless remained indebted to the Charlie Daniels Band and other Capricorn Records acts, including the Allman Brothers Band, whom he later contended "basically put us in the White House."⁸⁶ The admiration remained mutual.

“Jimmy Carter is the most honorable man to hold the office of president of the United States of America in my lifetime,” Daniels told Kemp at the turn of the twenty-first century.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, despite his continued affinity for Carter, Daniels emphasized now and then that he “answer[s] to God; I don’t answer to a political party...Politics is a no-win situation.”⁸⁸

Changes in Perceptions of the South

In the 1970s, the term “redneck” transcended from a pejorative to a point of pride.⁸⁹ “Jimmy brought attention to a part of the country that people didn’t know a lot about,” Daniels recalled.⁹⁰ In the process, Carter, Daniels, and the other popular Capricorn Records artists changed prevailing mentalities about the region. As Schulman observed, a decade earlier most Americans considered the South to be the “land of moonshine and fiddle music, racism and possum stew—a place they passed through as quickly as possible on the way to Florida.”⁹¹ And, though negative associations with the otherization in the film *Deliverance* (1972) remained, much to Carter’s continued chagrin, some semblance of Southern pride had been reclaimed by these chic Southern rock acts and their good ol’ boy image.⁹² According to Kemp, “Ten to fifteen years earlier, a redneck was a fellow who wore his hair short or slicked back, was hostile to long-haired hippies who looked like Van Zant or Charlie Daniels...Now, many of the guys who looked like Van Zant or Charlie Daniels *were* the rednecks.”⁹³

Conclusion

This present study, through an examination of an era characterized by change in the U.S. political and musical scenes, elucidates how politicians and musicians form relationships, the motivations for such relationships, and the media coverage of such relationships. In this case, Capricorn Records executive Phil Walden served as a mediator between Carter and his Capricorn artists. Though some of his acts, including the Marshall Tucker Band, alleged that they felt pressured by Walden to endorse Carter and to perform on behalf of the presidential candidate, Daniels reiterated his autonomy in making the decision to endorse and to engage in fundraising concerts on behalf of Carter.⁹⁴ A reluctant political campaign supporter, Daniels identified with Carter based upon their shared Southern heritage, Christian faith, and love of the sounds of Southern rock music.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, in a moment of investigative deconstructions, these artist-candidate relationships were becoming news on the campaign trail,

and reporters, such as *Rolling Stone* correspondent Art Harris, interrogated the origins and motivations for these relationships.⁹⁶ Though Daniels continuously asserted that he did not want anything in return for the celebrity benefit concerts, his contribution to the Carter campaign, many reporters believed that Walden and his Capricorn Records artists sought patronage in the form of the implementation of special measures for the recording industry. Amid these interrogations, and the simultaneous crises facing Walden and Carter, the political bandwagon built on the “redneck chic” of this new South of the mind derailed. Nevertheless, a mutual affinity endured as both Carter, Walden, Daniels, and other prominent acts in the 1976 campaign articulated gratitude for the extraordinary efforts to offer Americans “a government as good as its people.”⁹⁷

Although Giddens posits social actors have the ability to make intelligent interpretations of cultural provisions such as songs, recent research supports the affective power of music in the political environment.⁹⁸ Dewberry and Millen assert that musical performers have the ability to send and receive messages with live audiences and that music has “a much greater affective power than most, if not all, other forms of communication.”⁹⁹ Nevertheless, measuring the ability of social actors to select or to ignore messages from a cultural product is challenging, and isolating the effects of musical performance on audience perspectives is difficult.¹⁰⁰ In the end, as Associated Press correspondent Matt Yancey reported on the trail, Carter was not under any misconception that the folks in the stands were cheering for him, but these concerts were priceless for their role in funding his campaign and providing a new source of volunteers.¹⁰¹

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Marketing Agile Artists: How Music Labels Can Leverage TikTok's Virality

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Abstract

TikTok's meteoric rise in recent years is unparalleled by any other social media platform. From a music standpoint, TikTok differs from other social media as sound lies at the center of its user experience. Unknown artists have used the platform's democratized algorithm to get their music in front of fans; one viral song trend can catapult an artist into a massive chart and commercial success. This has led to TikTok becoming responsible for the bulk of new music discovery, from breaking new artists to resurrecting older ones. While studies have shown the link between how smaller artists have used TikTok to find a following, little research has been done to show how major labels should leverage TikTok in their marketing rollouts. Certainly, digital marketing's peer-to-peer or co-creation between larger artists and their fans has been part of music marketing for some time, and this strategy worked well for Harry Styles and Lizzo on TikTok in the summer of 2022. Yet, music virality on the platform is more often than not being dictated by the users over the strict marketing intent of the labels. This paper shows how TikTok's music virality eschews the co-creation of traditional social media marketing in favor of user-generated content. In other words, users don't merely comment or circulate content; they become the content. TikTok is changing music marketing from a co-creative ecology to a user-generated medium using micro-influencers and agile marketing methods.

Keywords: TikTok, virality, music marketing, user-generated content, agile marketing

Introduction

On May 22, 2022, musical act Halsey posted a video on TikTok that quickly went viral. The video was a low-angle close-up of the singer's face looking sad and not saying anything. The overlay implied that until Halsey created a viral moment on the platform, the label would hold their¹ new music hostage. Halsey then listed their successful sales of 165 million records, implying that the label's viral demands were unreasonable. "Everything is marketing," read the text, and stated that every artist is subjected to this form of performative labor. Halsey's statements set off a firestorm of discourse on Twitter, mostly criticizing the music industry's expectations of its artists. Halsey's video received an avalanche of responses, thereby unintentionally creating the viral moment the label had wanted.

While social media skeptics point to Halsey's anti-marketing video as an effective marketing strategy, the conversation does elicit dialogue about how artists can best leverage TikTok to promote their music. Halsey's response that they shouldn't have to create fake marketing moments on social media to release music is not a new sentiment. Marketing rollouts are a de facto part of the music industry, with labels expecting their artists to participate. Viral videos on TikTok may seem "fake" to the artists or an additional tap on their creative resources, but this is not a recent phenomenon. In the early era of MTV, many musicians balked at making music videos. Bruce Springsteen famously told his manager that he was interested in two things: writing music and playing music. Springsteen had no interest in becoming a music video artist.² His first video, the Brian De Palma shot "Dancing in the Dark," with its cringe-inducing forced ending dance with Courteney Cox, went into heavy rotation on MTV. Ironically, the video was crucial in contributing to his first top-ten single and earning the Boss' first Grammy.

TikTok, like MTV, has proven to be a robust music marketing tool for artists who embrace it. TikTok is also responsible for music discovery and breaking new musical acts such as Lil Nas X, Doja Cat, and Megan Thee Stallion. Early adopters of the platform have found both the accessibility to fans and the increased visibility of their music a vital marketing tool. Yet, early adopters were predominantly new, unknown, or indie artists benefitting from the platform's lower entry barrier and organic virality. As TikTok enters its fourth year with its emphasis on music and growth, major labels are grappling with how to effectively use the platform in their marketing rollouts. Until 2022, TikTok had still evaded market predict-

ability for established acts. Certainly, there are major label acts, such as Harry Styles and Justin Bieber, whose new releases have benefitted from TikTok’s virality. Yet it remains unclear how labels can leverage TikTok into their marketing strategy. For example, who chooses what goes “viral”? How can an artist’s song become trending audio? How are these viral songs utilized on TikTok? Is user engagement different for music marketing on a music-based social media platform like TikTok versus the influencer marketing of Instagram or the conversation-centric discourse of Twitter? This paper aims to show how TikTok stands apart from other social media platforms for marketing new music.

TikTok’s Marketing Strategy

In 2016, the Beijing-based media and tech company ByteDance created TikTok, a platform mirroring the successful Chinese version, Douyin. In 2017 ByteDance bought the video platform Musical.ly and merged it with TikTok, keeping the latter’s name while adding the former’s user base. This merger allowed the newly branded TikTok to have a solid foundation of 100 million global users.³ Initially, TikTok was considered a kid’s platform, with its challenges, lip-syncs, and dances. Due to the pandemic, TikTok’s popularity swelled by such an amount that by August 2020, it had more than 100 million active users in the U.S., reaching far beyond its adolescent user base.⁴ As of 2022, TikTok has over a billion users worldwide and has been downloaded over 200 million times in the United States alone.⁵ According to the app’s statistics page, the percentage of TikTok users from the ages of 10 to 19 is 32.5%, while users 20 to 29 make up 29.5%,⁶ indicating that as of 2022, users under the age of 30 account for over 60% of the entire platform.

TikTok’s initial appeal lies in its user experience (UX). TikTok’s business model features elements of social networking and video-sharing platforms to deliver a new way to create value for consumers.⁷ As a mobile-native app, upon opening the platform, users are greeted by a full-screen video. This singular viewing experience allows for quick binging and scrolling through videos. One of TikTok’s most ingenious initial onboarding strategies was the ability to view a TikTok video without downloading the app. If a friend shared a video with you—whether you were or were not a TikTok user—you could open and watch the video. This sharing ability allowed others to become part of the viral video discussion without an initial commitment. Used as a source of entertainment

and escapism, early adopters quickly became viral sensations. TikTok's extremely user-friendly platform and peer-to-peer marketing are a large part of its rapid success.

TikTok's algorithm is the other area that increased its popularity. Unlike Facebook, Instagram, or the ephemeral Snapchat, TikTok uses an engagement-driven algorithm. A TikTok user's videos become popular the more others share, rewatch, and save these videos. While this is like Instagram's algorithm, it is not the primary push of content for the photo platform. Instagram initially prioritizes content based on followers, meaning those with large followings get pushed out more than users with fewer followers. TikTok does not rely on one's followers as a driver of virality and instead emphasizes the organic traction of users' videos. Thus, those with ten followers are just as likely to be pushed out as those with 10K followers. This vaunted algorithm causes TikTok to be a ground-up marketing platform versus a top-down platform such as Instagram.

Additionally, TikTok is not insular to one's friend group to feature content. Thus, where a closed system such as Facebook will prioritize SEO (search engine optimization) shared by your friend group, TikTok is a mixture of those you follow, and content creators chosen based on your interests. While TikTok's algorithm is not fully transparent, one area of the algorithm that seems to aid in its popularity is its ability to accurately curate a user's For You Page (FYP) to their niche interests. These niche areas create deep subcultures within the platform, making targeted marketing stronger but broadcast marketing more difficult. In other words, virality is a relative term on TikTok. Often a viral trend will vary considerably from one user to another. As more users onboard, and the niche algorithm deepens, the more narrow content will be per individual user. This benefits small music content creators or those with genre-specific fans. However, how do large artists reach all these siloed niche groups?

Changing the Competition

TikTok is not only gaining on its competition in numbers, but it is also actively changing its competition's UX design and algorithms. In the summer of 2021, Instagram CEO Adam Mosseri announced a shake-up in how the photo-sharing platform would calculate its algorithm. At the time, Instagram's UX allowed for a user's choice in viewing posts, static-image feed; stories, 24-hour dynamic content; or IGLive. Instagram also created short-form videos called "Reels" to compete directly with TikTok.

Mosseri stated that Reels would be the primary metric used to push one's content out to new followers.⁸

Instagram had previously engaged in this type of direct competition in 2016 when it developed "Stories" based on an identical design to Snapchat's Stories.⁹ The move paid off as behemoth Instagram buried the smaller platform's numbers, with the majority of early adopters being teens.¹⁰ Instagram seems to be betting that it can once again outperform another platform by copying TikTok's video format.¹¹ Yet, the 2022 numbers show that Instagram is only barely besting TikTok, with 2.9 billion to 2.2 billion users, respectively.¹² Instagram's trends on Reels also seem to lag behind TikTok by at least a week, primarily due to TikTok's in-app ease at creating native video content.

Instagram's Reels is not alone in aiming to capitalize on the increasing interest in short-form videos. In 2018 Facebook launched Lasso, a fifteen-second video app. Lasso never really took off, netting fewer than 80,000 daily users, and after two short years, the underperforming platform shuttered for good.¹³ Instead of including Lasso in-platform, part of Facebook's misstep was offering it as an additional downloaded app. In September 2021, Facebook course-corrected by introducing their video, also called "Reels." Most likely, Facebook opted to use Instagram's "Reels" name to create cross-platform branding. While Facebook had owned Instagram since 2012, they'd mostly functioned as separate companies. The common name was likely due to Facebook gearing up to announce its re-branded conglomerate company, Meta, in October 2021. Facebook's addition of short-form video has worked as Facebook's Reels account for half of the platform's twenty most viewed posts.¹⁴ While Facebook is still the biggest social media platform, Reels seems to be an attempt at offsetting its aging user base by capturing a younger audience.

Both Instagram and Facebook's short-form video Reels suffer from a lack of native content. Meta's Reels rely heavily on aggregated content, with 82% of Facebook's Reels coming directly from TikTok.¹⁵ This quickly resulted in serial cross posting and duplication across apps, whereas TikTokers would simply repost the same TikTok videos on Instagram Reels, resulting in swift pilfering of TikTok content genres and aesthetics to Reels.¹⁶ To create more in-platform content, Mosseri announced in April 2021 that Reels with TikTok's watermark would deprioritize the user's discovery algorithm.¹⁷ Despite lacking a watermark, TikTok trends are easy to spot on Instagram's Reels. Over a year after Instagram prioritizes

short-form video, instead of capitalizing on TikTok's short-form video trend, the older platform seems to be having a crisis of identity.

In 2021 YouTube entered the short-form video trend with their version aptly titled "Shorts." As of 2022, Shorts just surpassed 1.5 billion users and are being watched more frequently than YouTube's main creator's channels.¹⁸ For all this emphasis on capitalizing on TikTok's IP and user base, the Chinese company still outpaces both Meta's Reels and YouTube's Shorts. This data tells us that no matter which social media platform controls the market, all social media *users* prefer short-form video content.

With so much social media leaning into short-form videos, it is paramount for music marketers to create this content. Social media has long been a part of brand marketing; however, TikTok raises the stakes for music marketing. What marks TikTok is that music has always been foundational to its platform. While Instagram privileges image over text, TikTok favors sound. Much like the discussions in the arts between painting versus film, TikTok is a transmedia approach to storytelling and encourages content-created interaction with its audience.

Co-Creation in Music Marketing

Social media changed the landscape for music marketing. "[Before social media] marketing was very formulaic—get the right to co-sign, get the right tour, and then have a shot. The fate of whether an artist would break felt more dependent on gatekeepers," stated Lallie Jones, Marketing Director at 300 Entertainment.¹⁹ Ogden, Ogden, and Long conducted a historical overview of music marketing, illustrating how music marketing has gone from a top-down approach to that of a rhizome.²⁰ Jeremy Wade Morris described how marketing has "evolved from a philosophy based on the exchange of goods to a revised logic focused on intangible resources...[with] value defined and correlated with the consumer."²¹ Several studies in entertainment marketing have framed their inquiry on the experience economy, the co-creative enterprise, and service-dominant logic. Hoksbergen and Insch examine the co-creation of music festivals on Facebook, explicitly centering their research on attendees under the age of twenty-five.²² Unsurprisingly, their research revealed little participatory action on Facebook by this demographic.²³ Prahalad and Ramaswamy define co-creation as a collaborative value creation by both the producer and consumer.²⁴ In this case, this would be the musicians and their audience co-creating marketing value for the artist's music or tours. Prahalad and

Ramaswamy go on to state that co-creation in the social media space must offer a way for customers to personalize their co-creation experience.²⁵ Personalization allows artists to connect more directly to their fans.

Most of the music marketing literature examines smaller artists establishing new business models through social media's lower barrier of entry. Gamble, Brennan, and McAdam look at how crowdfunding has removed the necessity for smaller artists to be tethered to larger labels.²⁶ Gamble and Gilmore discuss how crowdfunding is upending traditional business models in the music industry.²⁷ Morris argues that indie musicians are becoming entrepreneurs and active marketers of their music through social media.²⁸ His argument is similar to Halsey's Twitter discussion regarding jobs that were once part of a label's marketing responsibility, which are now becoming an expected part of an artist's musical output.

Choi and Burnes assert that through co-creation, record labels, musicians, and fans work together to co-create value.²⁹ These mutually beneficial relationships promote horizontal versus vertical transactions between record labels, artists, and fans. Benjamin Toscher looks at music marketing through service-dominant logic to explain an alternate theory of value creation.³⁰ Toscher argues that TikTok's users, the music industry, and musicians all work within a mutually beneficial exchange framework on TikTok, creating valuation for all actors. Toscher's research indicates that the music industry uses TikTok content creators and conduits for their artist's music.

Paul Chambers identifies how specific social media platforms and music affiliation impact creatives.³¹ This study shows how musicians, especially independent musicians, can leverage social media as a marketing tool.³² While Chambers illustrated the impact of peer-to-peer networks in music marketing, similar to studies on fan culture, his study does not delve into TikTok specifically. Additionally, I argue that Toscher's elucidation of TikTok as a vessel for an artist's music does not indicate how audio trends work within the platform. TikTok is not a simple symbiotic relationship between artists and fans. Instead, it gives much more agency to user-created content as a marketing tool over any other social media platform.

TikTok and Music

Though immensely popular, TikTok's role in music is still an understudied area of inquiry. TikTok's user-created content has been investigated for its impact on community building and identity. Specifically,

TikTok's challenges have been shown to give voice to marginalized communities through music frameworks.³³ Bhandari and Bimo looked at identity creation and the participatory nature of users on the platform.³⁴ Abidin's study on celebrity and influence shows how TikTok's features have created new attention economies and labor practices.³⁵ These studies are in concert with many academic discussions on social media and co-creation in marketing. Recent studies compared celebrity and influencer culture on TikTok to other social media platforms in influencer marketing. Yet, as mentioned earlier, TikTok's influencers vary considerably from that of Instagram, where the former works on a discovery algorithm and the latter on follower size.

Since the platform launched, media outlets have been discussing how virality can bring visibility to unknown causes or artists.³⁶ In 2022 Vox was the first outlet to use data to drill down on TikTok's relationship to music creation and the industry. Specifically, they wanted to determine 1) how new artists go viral on TikTok, and 2) how these artists use the platform to create viable music careers.³⁷ This study was the first deep dive into the relationship between music virality and music sales, tracking how new artists can utilize TikTok to shape their music careers. Mostly this data looked at how many unknown artists got signed after having a viral TikTok hit. However, this study again looks at how smaller artists can use the platform but stops short at asking how larger artists are leveraging TikTok. The question major labels must ask is, "How can our most established acts effectively use TikTok for their rollout?" Viral videos using snippets of songs have shown a direct correlation to Spotify and *Billboard* chart position, but what is the best practice for creating an organic viral moment that translates into album sales? And finally, is TikTok purely a singles-driven market?

Good digital marketing dictates consistency in brand across social media platforms. However, for music marketing, this approach feels outdated. Music must be more agile in its approach to marketing. As sound is central to viral trends, it would stand to reason that a TikTok marketing strategy is imperative to any music artist's album rollout. For music marketing more broadly, labels need to interrogate how TikTok's virality compares to co-created fan marketing on other social media platforms.

Fan Connection

Music fans love to share. There is a history of fans creating “buzz” for their favorite artists since the early development of the record business in the twentieth century. In the 1960s, this might have been Grateful Dead fans trading homemade live recordings; in the 80s and 90s, this might have been underground indie and punk zines; and in the 2000s, this might be rappers posting beats and songs to SoundCloud. Fan culture has long been a part of music marketing. With the advent of social media, music labels have actively capitalized on fans as viable parts of their marketing strategy. “Fans are now affecting how we market,” said Harrison Golden, director of marketing at EMPIRE’s label division, responsible for 2020 viral TikTok hits like Money Man’s “24” and Cookiee Kawaii’s “Vibe”.³⁸ Consider the strength of Beyoncé’s Beyhive or the BTS A.R.M.Y.

In essence, the music industry has gone from a product to an experience economy, while marketing has gone from a transactional to an attention economy. With this shift, digital marketing has become the major focus of music marketing. Additionally, record label marketers have begun to encourage fans to help spread the discourse around their favorite artists. More digital marketing should develop strong relationships with fans energizing their participatory power to stimulate new cultural ideas primarily so that music fans become active participants in making music and musicians meaningful in the market.³⁹ While the concept of co-creation effectively means the consumer could just as well be a “creative partner” in the value-creating process, this notion is closer to influencer fan action or peer-to-peer marketing.

Value co-creation in the music business challenges the producer and consumer concept in the marketplace. “Co-creation, in this sense, can be defined as the collaborative creation of value by both the producer and the consumer.”⁴⁰ This new dynamic, in turn, creates a “greater relational and engaging experience for every stakeholder.”⁴¹ More prominent labels see this as a way to offset marketing costs, while indie acts also benefit by having a closer connection to their fanbase. In theory, cutting the intermediaries makes digital marketing cheaper to produce and market music and potentially affords artists more intimate and meaningful relationships with their fans. YouTube and Twitter create a more intimate and accessible relationship between fans and artists.⁴² Musicians have become active marketers of their music through social media, with musicians replacing various jobs that were once part of a marketing team or record label. Now,

musicians have become entrepreneurs and the marketing team of their artistic output.

According to these ideas of social media co-creation, Halsey would make a TikTok video, and their legions of fans would circulate it, thereby creating the label's desired virality. In essence, this is what their anti-viral video accomplished; however, this top-down marketing approach on TikTok fails to consider the platform's functionality. TikTok is upending influencer marketing in favor of user-generated content. Instead of the artists as entrepreneurs and the fandom as "workers" where the fans disseminate the musician's message, TikTok's user-generated marketing is closer to *agile marketing* than traditional broadcast marketing methods.

TikTok's Music Discovery

TikTok is essential to music marketing. More than other platforms, TikTok is a social network centered around songs. In other words, TikTok's value-add is beyond co-creation between artists and fans, beyond digital marketing's mass dissemination, and even beyond creating an artist's "brand." TikTok's impact on music marketing is more significant than social media's "wide-scale democratization of the influencer industry."⁴³

TikTok has become integral to music discovery. According to a 2021 study, 75% of TikTok visitors discover artists there, while 72% of TikTokers associate certain songs with TikTok, and 67% are more likely to search out tracks they first heard on the app on a music streaming platform.⁴⁴ TikTok isn't just affecting music streaming; it's also impacting music sales. Music industry consultant at MIDiA, Tatiana Cirisano, found TikTok users are more likely to spend money on music and be more invested in it.⁴⁵ According to MIDiA's findings, 40% of active TikTok users pay a monthly subscription for music, compared to 25% of the general population. Additionally, 17% of these users also buy artists' merchandise monthly, compared to 9% of the general population. In other words, TikTok's audience is invested in music.

TikTok's user connection to music discovery significantly affects how labels should consider marketing their more prominent acts. Toscher argues that TikTok falls into the co-creation category: "Music providers and marketers benefit by increasing the reach and exposure of their music; business-motivated influencers benefit by creating engaging content or exploiting trending memes or songs on TikTok."⁴⁶ While co-creation surrounding TikTok videos shows mutually beneficial gains for artists and

fans, there is a fundamental misconception about 1) how these videos go viral, and 2) who is responsible for envisioning the message of the viral content. Additionally, while these figures show a correlation between songs on TikTok and their uptick in Spotify streams, there has not been a study that indicates a direct link between TikTok song virality and album sales.

From Co-Creation to User-Generated

Many acts have benefitted from TikTok's discovery. Certainly, Lil Nas X, Doja Cat, and Glass Animals all have the platform to thank for building their careers. In fact, as of this writing in the third week of June 2022, four out of the top five *Billboard Hot 100* are viral TikTok songs: Harry Styles' "As It Was," Jack Harlow's "First Class," Lizzo's "About Damn Time," and "Running Up That Hill" by Kate Bush. While Bush's chart position is primarily due to television marketing through the song's placement on the Netflix show *Stranger Things*, the other three songs are each artist's first single from their upcoming album. Additionally, the three songs have been on the chart for approximately the same time: Styles' song for eleven weeks, Harlow's for ten, and Lizzo's at nine. Each song demonstrates that the major label successfully leveraged TikTok before their artist's album release.

Additionally, all three of these new charting singles have used the song's title as their viral song snippet. For the labels, when the fifteen-second clip of music matches the name of the song, this is marketing gold. Possibly savvy marketing managers reverse-engineered all three of these *Hot 100* singles using TikTok's algorithm to appeal to a specific social media demographic. Due to this marketing possibility, it is more beneficial to drill down on traditionally organic approaches to TikTok video virality.

The short clip of music used in viral videos often serves as a shorthand for its message. This lyrical snippet is often not the song's name but instead a part of the song that resonates with TikTok users. For instance, Lil Nas X's song "Industry Baby" had an #industrybaby challenge. Jack Harlow raps the lines: "Say your time is comin' soon but just like Oklahoma/Mine is comin' sooner/ I'm just a late bloomer/I didn't peak in high school; I'm still out here gettin' cuter."⁴⁷ Videos show a series of images representing a glow-up over time.

This viral aspect takes individual bars of a song and isolates them. The context then becomes these lines individually, not necessarily the

songs. However, at times the lines do correlate to the song's meaning. "Industry Baby" is Lil Nas X's response to his critics who claim that his massive success with "Old Town Road" was a TikTok flash in the pan or one-hit-wonder. "Industry Baby" from Nas X's sophomore outing represents his glow-up as a musical artist. In this case, the viral videos mirror the song's message by showcasing user glow-ups. A notable aspect of the viral video trend of "Industry Baby" while it is Lil Nas X's song, it is Harlow who is featured. At the time of the song's release, July 2021, Harlow was not a household name. He'd certainly gained fame from his 2020 track, "What's Poppin" single, and his anointment by *XXL Magazine* into 2020's "Freshman Class," but it was "Industry Baby" that brought him to the masses and became his first number one hit. What this virality displays is how the song snippet may propel more than the sales of the intended marketed artist.

"Industry Baby" shows that virality on TikTok can come down to what message maps onto parts of the song. While the viral user videos for "Industry Baby" mostly follow the song's message, this isn't always the case. I would argue that the symbiosis between artist and listener intent is not a foregone conclusion on TikTok. Melissa Avdeeff's article on Taylor Swift's 2017 song, "You Need To Calm Down" (YNTCD), is also a musical response to her critics. The video features many members of the LGBTQ+ community from recognizable shows such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *RuPaul's Drag Race*. The song is pertinent to Swift and the comment she seems to be making is on the abundance of hate in the public discourse.

Avdeeff traces the song's conversation on both Twitter and TikTok. She finds that Twitter, a predominately discourse-based platform, centered around the song's "performative allyship" with the LGBTQ+ community.⁴⁸ For Swift, the song represents an intentional political position as she'd come under fire in the past for her politically neutral stance. The critique that Swift was merely aligning herself with the LGBTQ+ community to curry favor with this community ultimately led to mixed reception for the song both critically and on Twitter.

However, TikTok users took specific lyrics from Swift's song and made their viral challenge divorced from the song's original meaning. What Swift's virality on TikTok shows is instead of traditional marketing related to an artist's song, this trend was exclusively user-created. In this case, "YNTCD" created its meaning once it became a viral video. Because

the video only isolated lines in the song, the negative connotation, or discussions of “performative allyship” that plagued the song on Twitter are absent from TikTok’s viral “YNTCD” trend. In essence, the user-generated content pivoted the online discussion and reframed the song’s meaning. TikTok users acted not as co-creators in marketing but as damage control public relations agents.

TikTok’s viral songs have become untethered from their source material. Instead, the artist’s original song has been used as a tool by TikTok’s creators to enter a musical dialogue that may or may not have any association with the marketing or meaning of the original song. In other words, music on TikTok has become the foundational building block for the user’s video message.

These examples are essential for music marketers trying to tightly control their artist’s TikTok image. Perhaps instead of forcing Halsey to find a way for her song to go viral, there needs to be more emphasis placed on the users and how they make meaning from an artist’s song. In other words, there is little guarantee artists can control how a song will be used on TikTok, let alone ensure it will go viral.

Proving to be a user-generated platform through layered meaning with music at the center, TikTok illuminates how users interact with music and media texts through innovation and remix. These videos show how users can reinterpret a musical artist’s meaning and create meaning through their lenses. In other words, an artist’s song narrative may not directly connect to a snippet of that song’s TikTok virality. Instead, user-generated content creates its meaning through user interpretation versus artist intention.

This user-generated meaning contradicts how record label’s view artist marketing. Kristen Bender, Senior Vice President of digital strategy and business development at Universal Music Group, articulates that TikTok has become a critical part of artist storytelling.⁴⁹ This argument looks at a consistent artist brand across platforms. Music marketing on social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter creates an exchange framework between TikTok’s users, the music industry, and musicians, where TikTok is mutually beneficial for all actors. TikTok’s high percentage of user participation indicates that the type of co-creation or fan marketing that has been part of social media strategy changes on TikTok.

TikTok's Participatory Framework

Unlike Facebook, whose feed is a user's network, TikTok's algorithm is based on what you like, not who you know. In addition, Instagram's influencer model allows those with the largest followings to become the most discoverable. Thus, an Instagram influencer's content is pushed outward depending on the number of followers. In contrast, TikTok's algorithm is based purely on user engagement and trending audio, meaning a user could have a small following. Still, if they create a popular video, TikTok will increase its video visibility exponentially. TikTok users can actively manipulate their personal algorithm to drive the videos they want to see. While TikTok users understand the algorithm is skewed in many ways, it remains unclear *how*.⁵⁰ Without transparency into the workings of TikTok, it is hard to state with certainty how much control users have. However, TikTok's crowdsourced content allows users to feel more in control, giving them an active participatory role in the platform.

TikTok's algorithm elucidates two takeaways for major label music marketers: 1) TikTok, unlike Instagram or Twitter, privileges content over followers, and 2) TikTok's UX is based on peer-to-peer viral creation and circulation. First, because the content is central to TikTok's virality, it is also worth highlighting that while Twitter is mainly a text-based platform and Instagram an image-based one, TikTok's foundation is sound. Even from its earliest inception of dances or lip-syncs, TikTok's earworms and user interest drove the narrative structure for video content.

Additionally, users engage more in TikTok than in other social media platforms due to its seamless in-app UX. One need not know about video editing or have the correct programs to create a video. The numerous resources TikTok provides users to make videos lower the risk and threshold of video creation.⁵¹ This means more users will create content and actively engage with its transmedia properties, including music. Tatiana Cirisano who works for a music company that tracks TikTok's musical impact, states TikTok has changed music listening from being a one-way relationship to listening to participation. Thus, from a marketing standpoint, TikTok privileges active engagement, both monetary and social (peer-to-peer) marketing, as well as user-generated content. Many artists and labels have tried the Instagram approach of paying influencers to use songs in their content. Yet many labels state that while they test varying strategies, most times, when a song takes off on TikTok, it seems to happen organically. How these viral moments get started is not as random as it appears. It is

merely a reconfiguration of top-down broadcasting to a rhizome growth pattern.

TikTok's vaunted algorithm is constantly searching for new and popular clips rather than pushing content from already established influencers. In essence, this means that anyone can see their video go viral. But unfortunately, this is the viral myth we have come to accept: virality is a game of chance, and anyone can go viral if the content is clever enough.

Mathematically this is incorrect. While it is true that someone with one hundred followers can go viral on TikTok, this is not usually what creates a viral song trend. In many ways, viral songs such as Lizzo's "About Damn Time" have much more in common with traditional broadcast marketing than perceived. Lizzo has almost 20 million followers on TikTok, meaning that her reach is broad. She also actively duets with users. This influencer engagement strategy is like the co-creation in music marketing previously discussed. Mass, monolithic, monogamous fan bases are becoming a thing of the past, so going small may be a better strategy than trying to go viral. The lowered barrier to entry for music-making, combined with the attention recession, has created a paradox: it is easier than ever to be an artist but harder than ever to be commercially successful.⁵²

Thus, if music marketers wanted to reach wide or create this virality, they would benefit from agile, not influencer, marketing. Music marketers should pull snippets of their artist's newly-released single and give them to micro or niche influencers. These groups then create the content that labels hope will stick. Ultimately, if these videos do not get enough traction, labels can iterate their marketing campaign using user research. This ability to iterate content sets TikTok apart from other social media platforms. In other words, music trends have allowed for real-time assessment of a campaign's progress. In addition, TikTok's music center and algorithmic preferences allow artists to utilize agile marketing. As the attention recession meets the fragmentation of listenership, large viral moments will become fewer and further between. In other words, as universal cultural moments lessen, micro-viral moments will increase. Virality will shift from a shared cultural short-hand to an individual niche footnote.

Gen Z MTV

While this paper concentrated on music marketing for artists currently releasing music, future research could be done by looking into the growing market for old songs that are given new life through TikTok. With

older songs, what is the correlation between discovery trends to sales? Is the algorithm for these songs reaching a new market audience for the band? For example, if Kate Bush were to tour again, would she sell out stadiums based on her virality on *Stranger Things* and TikTok? Understanding the link between sound and marketability is an area that needs more investigation.

TikTok often gets the pejorative label as a passive entertainment endeavor where one mindlessly scrolls for hours through videos. Yet even this passivity creates sonic memory for the viral songs. TikTok creates a signpost for viral songs that stick with the user long after they've closed the platform. Further research should investigate the ear-worm aspect of the platform in terms of duration and interest. Does knowing "About Damn Time" mean that the casual user will seek out Lizzo's song on Spotify? How quickly does a viral sound vanish from circulation? The popular audio sounds from the early pandemic seem long in the rear-view mirror. How long is the tail on TikTok's viral sound, and what does this tell us about the attention economy market for music?

One final area of interest goes back to the similar sentiment between today's artists like Halsey refusing to make TikTok videos and musicians of the early 80s. When MTV started, there were barely any music videos to play. Because of their lack of inventory, MTV consistently played those bands with videos. Artists who leaned into the new short-form video format saw the sales of their albums rise exponentially. Once labels fully realized MTV's marketing arm, they demanded music videos from all their major artists. As a result, both TikTok and MTV have been seen as integral to music marketing.

TikTok has been a well-established platform for helping smaller musicians reach a wider audience. Much like TikTok, early MTV was fundamental in getting smaller acts such as Devo, Gary Numan, and Eurythmics label contracts. These small acts benefited from timing and creativity in their ability to get in front of millions of young viewers. But MTV didn't just make the musicians famous; it also made its curators famous. "The stars on TikTok aren't the artists themselves—who are largely absent from the clips that make their songs successful—but rather influencers like Addison Rae and Charli D'Amelio, who are more Martha Quinn than Madonna.

This paper has tried to show that while prominent TikTok influencers such as D'Amelio no doubt help propel viral trends, micro-influencers

and user-generated content are the more effective marketing tools on the platform. Instead of relying on mega influencers, labels and artists should learn another MTV lesson. When MTV started, there was no blueprint for music videos. As I have mentioned, this allowed for a lot of creativity in what was seen on the channel. Eventually, budgets expanded, and MTV became a much more slick and stylized entity, catering almost exclusively to the upper echelon of musical artists. TikTok still holds on to a lot of its organic creativity. However, TikTok, like MTV, may become more structured, losing part of its current innovation. Record labels should encourage users to tap this wide-open space, working with content creators to become visionary partners versus constant consumers. On a recent comic roundtable, *Saturday Night Live's* Michael Che joked about his content on TikTok, "I've seen someone lip-sync my joke and get more views than me."⁵³ Maybe Halsey's marketing team should take a cue from the comic and lean into user-created chaos while they still can.

Endnotes

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Reviews

David Baskerville, Tim Baskerville, and Serona Elton. *Music Business Handbook and Career Guide*, 13th edition. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2022. [Sagepub.com](https://doi.org/10.25101/22.6)

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The field of music business education is highly dynamic, rapidly growing, and ever changing. It remains a great challenge for any educator to deliver an introductory, comprehensive framework that presents the breadth of music industry history, development, and opportunity for today's learners. It must be maddeningly complex to maintain a textbook for university-level music industry studies when the context of how music is created, promoted, discovered and consumed, shared, amplified, and monetized continues to shape-shift in protean fashion.

Several generations of music business academics and their students have relied on David Baskerville's and Tim Baskerville's iconic *Music Business Handbook and Career Guide* since its first publication in 1979 just as the first postsecondary programs in the field were getting underway. Tim Baskerville was the editor of David's first edition and chief author beginning with the fifth edition, published in 1990. We owe David and Tim a debt of gratitude for organizing, presenting, and frequently revising their work. We can thank Serona Elton now, too, who as coauthor with Tim of the thirteenth edition, will write and edit future editions of this indispensable book.

It is significant that Tim Baskerville chose Professor Elton for this role. Many members of the MEIEA community will know Serona from her work as director of the Music Industry Program at the University of Miami Frost School of Music where she is also the Associate Dean of Administration. She is head of educational partnerships at the Mechanical Licensing Collective (The MLC) and previously worked in the field at EMI and WMG. Professor Elton is a former Governor of the Recording Academy, Florida Chapter. She is an attorney and a past president of MEIEA. Few know the territory as well. And what Serona doesn't know, she knows how to track down from the best sources in the industry.

There are innumerable changes in this thirteenth edition with the addition of learning outcomes at the start of each chapter, an invaluable new

feature. Most of the chapters have been reorganized, which yields many benefits for learners and educators. The chapters are now closer in size to each other, which supports teaching the topics within the same class module. For example, a new chapter, Music in Media, merges the topics of music creation for advertising, film, television, and video games into one chapter; these topics were previously spread across three different chapters.

As expected, the thirteenth edition includes a new chapter on on-demand streaming, covering key milestones in the transition in recorded music from ownership to access and related topics including advances and licensing, breakage and streaming-related controversies, low royalty rates, inflated stream counts, stream ripping, and privacy. Thankfully this edition contains a significantly revised chapter on record label marketing, distribution, and the digital supply chain; tools available to DIY artists; coverage of the Music Modernization Act of 2018; and the formation of The MLC.

A large amount of the text has been refreshed, and while the overall structure of many chapters is intact, much of the wording has been revised and new chapter sections have been added to support student engagement.

There were several places in previous editions where actual contract language was provided. As a textbook for an introductory, undergraduate course, contract language was less helpful than its replacement, a detailed new Contract Concepts section where key contract terms are well explained in chapters covering artist management, music publishing, recording agreements, and concert promotion.

Representation matters, and many of the photos have been updated to bring greater diversity in both race and gender. New photos of artists and executives, more recognizable by today's college students, have been added. All figures and illustrations have been updated through 2020.

Over fifty words and terms have been added to the glossary, like ARPU (average revenue per user, a key metric for understanding and comparing the financial performance of digital services and networks) as just one example.

To be sure, historical topics in the field do not change even as our interpretation of historical events continues to evolve: the historical precedents of copyright in the United States and around the world; the development of music publishing in the United States; and the introduction, evolution, and consolidation of the recorded music business. Treatment of

those topics in the thirteenth edition is largely unchanged from the twelfth edition published in 2018.

When contemplating the future of the relatively new field of music business in higher education, we can be certain that music creation, distribution, and consumption will continue to change—as will music itself. Disruptive startups will emerge and give rise to new uses and licensing models. And for the foreseeable future, the *Music Business Handbook and Career Guide* under the capable direction of Serona Elton will continue to light the path toward professional understanding, clarity of complex issues, and deeper study.

Larry Miller

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and their financial sponsors on music catalog acquisitions, capital formation, digital product and service development, and restructuring. He advises rights holders and music creators on public policy and litigation and has provided expert testimony before the United States Copyright Review Board (CRB) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Miller has commented on CBS, ABC, CNBC, CNN, Fox News, and NPR; in the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Time*, *Business Week*, *Financial Times*, *The Economist*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Billboard*. He is author of the report “Same Heart/New Beat: How Record Labels Amplify

Talent in the Modern Music Marketplace.” His article “Metadata: How to Develop the Foundation for the Music Business of Tomorrow” was published in *The Licensing Journal*, and “Paradigm Shift: Why Radio Must Adapt to the Rise of Digital” was published in *Entertainment and Sports Lawyer*, the ABA Forum on the Entertainment and Sports Industries. Miller is a proud board member of the Louis Armstrong House Museum and the Newport Festivals Foundation. He is also a Clio Award winning voice-over actor.

Keith Hatschek. *The Real Ambassadors: Dave and Iola Brubeck and Louis Armstrong Challenge Segregation*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2022. www.upress.state.ms.us

<https://doi.org/10.25101/22.7>

Keith Hatschek’s new book outlines the efforts surrounding Dave Brubeck and his wife Iola to present a jazz musical. Originally entitled *World Take a Holiday* and renamed as *The Real Ambassadors*, the development of the piece itself from concept to ultimate publication as both a studio album and festival performance represents the focal point of Hatschek’s work. The play itself, and primarily the behind-the-scenes work to bring it to life, not only provide an engaging window to consider the situation of jazz within a broader, mid-century socio-political context, it also allows Hatschek to organize the text in an engaging way. Rather than submitting to a pedantic historical chronology, the author uses the various iterations of a musical under construction to introduce his key and secondary characters, critical issues like segregation and the meaning of jazz, as well as important insight into the operations of the music industry. The moves required to bring the musical to life provide a compelling dynamicity that figures for and speaks to the negotiated aspects of those broader issues. This tension alone makes a strong though implicit argument for the quality of the musical and aligns it with that of Hatschek’s fine book.

The text is in sixteen chapters most of which achieve a high level of engagement while remaining concise. The first three chapters introduce us

to the Brubecks and their work, as well as its particular stance regarding U.S. foreign relations. The following six chapters outline the great number of hurdles, challenges, and precious few gains that work to present both an existential crisis and a clear sense of urgency facing the ultimate fortune of the musical. The final seven chapters show the growing sense of community, resolve, and gradually, the rewards of their creativity and perseverance begin to appear. The ensuing studio record and increased international interest lead to the culminating single performance of an abridged version of the musical staged as a “concert performance” at the 1962 Monterey Jazz festival. The remainder of the book lovingly details the reception of that performance, Brubeck’s legacy, and reveals Hatschek among a cast of supporters who have worked to preserve that legacy over the last decade since Dave Brubeck’s passing.

From Iola Brubeck’s inception of the idea for a jazz musical in 1956 to the scant reenactments of *The Real Ambassadors* during the varied memorials to her husband, Hatschek’s book carefully tends to (and firmly locates itself within) the legacy of the musical’s reception. As he relates, even though the play never realized its intended Broadway debut, there is truly a gem of a story in the effort to get it there. The plight of Iola and Dave Brubeck’s jazz musical is the product of a constellation of diverse cultural, economic, and political forces at work over the last sixty-six years and counting—but the fight for the core issues addressed by the musical and its creators remain just as vital for us in 2022; if not more so. The prominence of race in the national discourse of identity, the place of music within questions of identity that range from the national to the individual; these are some of the issues that provide Hatschek’s book with a very broad reach—not to mention the interest of the story itself.

Upon reading this work, a couple of truths are immediately unescapable. First, the story and the communication of its relevance are in very capable hands. Secondly, and in support of the first point, there is a resonating *esprit de corps* that ties the author’s work with the remarkable efforts of a broad cast of characters who worked to bring the Brubecks’ vision to the stage in a single, powerful performance. Hatschek establishes his book on the bedrock of values at the core of jazz itself, namely the freedom to speak to power and the love required to make that communal statement. In this sense, it succeeds as a surrogate for what several key players of the narrative consider to be the Achilles heel that kept the

musical off Broadway in the first place: namely “a very strong book with conflict and tension.”

While the comparison above refers to the need for a stronger “play book” (dramatic script to drive the play itself), *The Real Ambassadors* succeeds as a book, in my estimation, on these very terms. It packs an unexpected emotional force precisely because of the author’s extremely careful and detailed recollection of obstacles and challenges working against the Brubecks’ project. Hatschek brings into sharp relief the unique power of the artist class under the leadership of true luminaries to come together and overcome those challenges and, in so doing, to show a way forward for the rest of us. At the height of conflict, the author unleashes the beauty of testimony to a singular passing moment seared into the memories of those lucky few—some six thousand attendees of the 1962 Monterey Jazz Festival. Until now.

As a superficial fan of jazz music, I found myself in a much better position after reading this book. Hatschek’s style as a storyteller avoids pitfalls common to historical writing, in turn yielding a very enjoyable read for someone like myself. By that token, this book would have to be a treasure for a true jazz aficionado, or a fan of Brubeck, Louis Armstrong, or a student of the specific place of jazz music in the political context of the United States during the Cold War and Civil Rights eras. For example, Hatschek balances “fly-on-the-wall” minutia against careful and transparent command of narrative arc to effective results. The backstories woven together by intimate details revealed from meticulous research of correspondences, critical reviews, and personal and published interviews reveal deep detail to history as lived experience rather than objective occurrence.

The author’s treatment of Armstrong’s notorious manager Joe Glaser is another strong example of capable authorship. As one of the main proponents working against the fruition of the Brubecks’ musical vision, Glaser’s character is constantly reset relative to the primary function to work on behalf of his client Louis Armstrong’s economic interest. Rather than throwing Glaser under the bus, as I found myself almost wanting to see, there is an even-handed maturity and concision that makes less of the seductive detour into Glaser’s mob ties and soberly recognizes his history of success for Armstrong in tandem with his “lack of genuine support for the project.” This even-handed treatment of Joe Glaser allows for the text to establish confidence as it pieces together an account that is significantly emotionally charged in its own right. Despite his own passion for the proj-

ect, I was not under the impression that the author had a personal agenda that compromised his ability to reveal the compelling story of *The Real Ambassadors*. In fact, the only moment where he steps out to address us in the first person is in the final chapter, “Rediscovering the Real Jazz Ambassadors,” where he shows his own contributions to the recent reception of the Brubecks’ legacy.

In addition, the author’s ability to change discursive registers according to the demands of the situation contributes greatly to the richness of the story. For example, Hatschek’s comfort with the language and technique of lyrical analysis works to show Iola’s skill for addressing racial tension in religious and political rhetoric. His music business acumen regarding licensing and publishing allows him to show how Dave Brubeck initially sacrificed his own royalties to get Armstrong on board with the recording phase of the Real Ambassadors project and then later to show how Dave was able to transition from a lifetime of touring by setting up his own publishing company. Ultimately, the skill to manage these in a way that respects the history belongs to the additional skill of the storyteller who makes visible why this lesser-known chapter in the history of jazz is so valuable.

If not in the years of research required to render this story in such a vivid and compelling way, the love Hatschek contributes is most evident in the attention given to the secondary or “behind-the-scenes” characters and the fly-on-the-wall anecdotes that place them in the storyline and breathe life and feeling into its pages. Dave’s brother Howard Brubeck’s last-minute essential work to provide a bound chart with dialogue and cues for each of the dozen or so musicians; Armstrong’s wife Lucille fretting over the long hours her husband was sinking into memorization; Jazz critic Ralph Gleason’s surprising push of the project despite not always endorsing Brubeck’s work; Dave’s son Darius’ efforts to ensure the global impact envisioned by his parents’ musical; Broadway producers Marshall Jamison and Paul Gregory who were able to comment on the commercial potential of the actual proposed musical; the pivotal support of Jimmy Lyons, the co-founder of the Monterey music festival; London-based agent Harold Davison who explored U.K.-based filming of the project, etc., etc. All of these personalities create a rich tapestry animating the storyline in an engaging way. Importantly, we find the author himself among the cast of characters working to carry the legacy forward.

As I read the final pages of the last chapter, I noticed the author pulling my attention out of what started to feel like a dream surrounding the staging of *The Real Ambassadors* and bringing me back to waking life. The effect was startling as I came to reflect upon the thread of racism across space and time, linking the core of Iola's vision not to some distant reality, but carefully tied to our own current events. I found the official narratives of jazz as part of America's cold war propaganda effort counterbalanced and ironically overturned by those of the musicians themselves forced to cancel performance after performance at home and even abroad (c.f.: South African Apartheid) due to venues unwilling to stage a mixed-race performance. In the book's curtain call, Hatschek shows students and musicians ranging from Lebanon High School in Oregon, Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in New York, to the Detroit Jazz Festival all working in concert to bring the message of unity and equality over and against racial difference all the while demonstrating its continued relevance.

Paul Linden

Paul Linden has toured North America and Western Europe as a blues and roots-american artist. He has performed on *Austin City Limits*, CBS, NPR, and Mike King's award-winning documentary on Chicago Blues. Festivals and venues Linden has played include the Montreal Jazz Festival, Memphis in May blues festival, Atlanta's Fox Theater, New York's Beacon theater, Portland's Roseland Theater, and the Filmore West. He has worked with Bo Diddley, B.B. King, Jerry McCain, Nick Moss, Susan Tedeschi, and Kim Wilson. His research interests in-



clude interdisciplinary and theoretical approaches to music industry studies. A selection of publications includes “Entrepreneurship: Theory and Application in a University Arts Management Setting,” “Translating Race and Genre in Popular Music,” and “Malcolm Chisholm: An Evaluation of Traditional Audio Engineering.” Linden’s research has been cited in the most recent authoritative history of Fender amplifiers, *The Soul of Tone: 60 Years of Fender Amps* (Hal Leonard 2007) and *Vintage Guitar Magazine*. He is also a regular contributor to magazines like the *Tone Quest Report* and the French-based magazine *Blues & Co*.

Mark V. Campbell. *Afrosonic Life*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. www.bloomsbury.com

<https://doi.org/10.25101/22.8>

The origins of turntablism, that is creating musical compositions solely with record turntables, can be traced back to Jamaica in the late 1950s and 1960s. Though the art form is more than sixty years old, there are still few books dedicated to examining the economic forces that necessitated the technique and the Afro-Caribbean influences that incubated the sound. There are lots of books that discuss the creative and technical aspects of the craft. Mark V. Campbell, Assistant Professor of Music and Culture at the University of Toronto Scarborough, Canada, has written a compact testimonial detailing the cultural and social motivations behind the practice.

With *Afrosonic Life*, Campbell offers an illuminating exposé of African ancestral creativities expressed through turntablism, dub, and remixing as resistant responses to the intersectional forces of dehumanization and commodification typically imposed upon Black artists and their works. Campbell has penned a poignant testament to the resilient artistic ingenuity summoned by Black DJs and dub artists as they challenge hierarchical market structures that are created and protected by Western hegemonies of thought and commerce such as individual rights and intellectual property ownership. Campbell masterfully explains the connection between the tra-

ditions of oral storytelling and musical improvisation to the contemporary principles of artistic agency and the reconstitution of Black bodies: artist and audience.

At 123 pages, the book is a brief but dense read. Campbell offers a first-person perspective in an otherwise academically-oriented text. The book is well-researched and would fit well as a historical reflection within Music and Culture, Music and Protest, History of Hip-Hop, or beat making production courses. The advanced vocabulary use and syntax make this a less-than-ideal text for lower division undergraduate courses, however. The bibliography is organized by chapters and a thorough index is included as well.

The text includes an introduction, four substantive chapters, and the conclusion. The introduction summarizes the author's experiences with the art form, explains his motivation for writing the book, and lays out a concise methodology detailing the research and writing processes. Campbell uses the introduction to orient readers to his specific use of terms and conditions that recur throughout the book. He's also careful to caution the reader that the text isn't contained to one culture since it spans African, Jamaican, and African American art forms and musical traditions. Likewise, Campbell provides a disclaimer that the book isn't rooted in one particular genre, since it covers the development and significance of turntablism across reggae, hip-hop, electro mashups, and remixes.

In chapter one, Campbell uses Sylvia Wynter's theory of the European construction of Man to contrast the concept of musical innovation as seen between Western convention and what he terms the Afrosonic diaspora. He explains how music-making techniques such as dubbing, scratching, remixing, and versioning that are commonly found in Afrosonic creations aren't musical considerations taught or valued in Western music. According to Western logic, Campbell asserts that these Afrosonic innovations amount to nothing more than simply entertainment. The author goes on to describe how DJs use turntablism as an active resistance to dominant Western musical thought and how turntablism is used as a subversive protest to consumerism and the commodification of Black bodies that were formerly enslaved. Campbell closes chapter one with a discussion of the cultural impact of traveling Jamaican sound systems and how they influenced Bronx-based DJ Kool Herc, who is often referred to as the father of American hip-hop.

In chapter two, Campbell details the rise of turntablism in American hip-hop through the lens of intentional exploration of new sonic experiments. The author compares experimental works of composer John Cage with typical creations of turntablists while acknowledging the overwhelming desire to work with rhythm demonstrated by the latter. Campbell describes how the rhythms of scratching and cutting created new musical conventions while the use of the wheelback (spinning a record backwards to locate a break point) was an intentional violation of the perceived sanctity of vinyl records. Turntablism was simultaneously form and chaos. The author closes chapter two by connecting techniques found in turntablism to oral traditions of the African diaspora and Rastafari speech patterns.

In chapter three, Campbell explores the riddim method which is a sound system technique that uses recycling, repetition, and voicing in its construction and performance. The author illustrates how the riddim method ignores copyright protections since it borrows and riffs heavily from source materials. Western concepts of copyright and property ownership are contrasted with improvisation and a focus on audience enjoyment that are central to Afrosonic musical cultures. Campbell examines how mixtape culture developed as a cottage industry within the larger American music business in the 1970s. Although record labels have used mixtapes as promotional vehicles since the 1990s, the author explains their cultural significance as methods of blending various musical genres including reggae, hip-hop, R&B, blues, and dance music into seamless Afrosonic tapestries.

In chapter four, Campbell discusses dubbing and remixing as related precursors to turntablism. Both musical innovations involve reimagining musical compositions sometimes through additive and at other times through subtractive techniques. The author expounds on how mixing consoles, turntables, and drum machines are used to rearrange compositions in ways that make them easier to manipulate and mix by other DJs. Campbell is keen to describe how the discussion of remix culture in academia tends to be anchored in intellectual concepts of American copyright constructs that discount Jamaican cultural legacies in favor of Western property ownership hierarchy.

Overall, Professor Campbell has written a thoughtful treatise on a significant musical innovation. I would not hesitate to recommend this text to anyone who wants an academic deep dive into the historical and cultural development of turntablism that undergirds reggae, hip-hop, dub,

and electronic music. I am suggesting this book as a supplementary reference in our composition course Exploratory Voice: Identity and Protest in Songs of Black America.

Marcus X. Thomas

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Professor Thomas is an educator and entertainment attorney who is also trained as a screenwriter and publicist.

During his twenty-five year career, he has maintained a boutique entertainment law practice and held several in-house positions with entertainment companies including a major record label, a major-affiliated music publisher, and the nation's largest education music print publisher. Thomas coauthored "The Commercial Music Industry in Atlanta and the State of Georgia—An Economic Impact Study." His study served as support for passing the Georgia Entertainment Industry Act of 2005. Thomas holds a Juris Doctor from Georgia State University, a Master of Fine Arts from Full Sail University, and a Master of Mass Communication from the University of Georgia.

Andrew Mall. *God Rock, Inc.: The Business of Niche Music*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021. www.ucpress.edu

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Music scholar Andrew Mall's *God Rock, Inc.* provides a series of in-depth, qualitative vignettes on various aspects of the American Christian music industry. As the book's subtitle, *The Business of Niche Music*, suggests, these many threads are meant to weave into a body of work that can inform our understanding of the ways that niche music markets function in general. Though I was initially skeptical of the ambitiousness of that scope, I was also intrigued by it. My interest was rewarded with a wealth of insight into the market dynamics and cultural capital of Christian music.

As Mall demonstrates in the introduction and throughout the book, the Christian music market has numerous idiosyncrasies and anachronisms that cause it to function differently than its secular counterpart. Indeed, "counterpart" may not even be the correct term as both the ethics and the economics that underlie Christian music are fundamentally different than the mainstream market. Part One of the book explores the historical context of these differences, beginning in the 1960s with the music of the Jesus People and proceeding up to the present day.

An important caveat that readers should be aware of is that the primary intent of this book is *not* to be a history of the Christian music industry. Rather, the historical events covered in Part One are chosen for their importance in the evolution of the industry and for their relevance to the discussions in Part Two. While Mall does utilize historical methodology at times, particularly with his use of oral histories as primary sources, the narrative is much more influenced by qualitative inquiry than by a systematic chronology. Overall, this stylistic choice was the right one for this book. I do think a book that is more explicitly historical, and that utilizes the excellent oral histories that Mall recorded, would be worth doing though. That being said, most of the important events and artists in the past half century of American Christian music make an appearance and figures such as Keith Green, Billy Ray Hearn, Steven Curtis Chapman, and Amy Grant all receive significant attention.

In my view, the most important contribution of this book is its insistence on viewing the Christian music industry through a market lens. That is not to say that the market lens is inherently more important than

other perspectives, but it is arguably the most neglected on this subject. There is an inherent resistance to market analysis that is baked into the culture of Christian music, a phenomenon Mall refers to as the “essential dichotomy between commerce and evangelism” (63). In the case of evangelical Christian culture, numerous factors contribute to a resistance of forcing the industry camel to pass through the eye of the market needle. Matters of money are often seen as taboo and not brought up in a public forum. While the mainstream music press, if they take any interest at all, are likely enough to be critical of Christian music’s political economy, such criticisms are often dismissed as attacks from a hostile enemy rather than carefully considered within the community. Faith-centric media outlets are often loath to tackle a true critical market analysis. There might be some polite calls to strike a better balance between money and ministry, or at most some hard handwringing over whether money is getting in the way of the mission, but the influence of market dynamics on song content, A&R, and other aspects remains a blind spot for Christian music as a whole.

By insisting on the market’s influence, and especially by giving voice to industry insiders to express how they have wrestled with that influence, *God Rock Inc.* opens a window into a world that is rarely seen. Overall, the book’s subject is a lightning rod for controversy. Some readers will not countenance any criticism of Christian music, for others no hedging of criticism will be tolerable. Mall, in my opinion, does an excellent job of maintaining critical distance from his subject, while avoiding the proverbial ditch on the other side of the road. He pulls no punches in insisting that profit has been a primary motivator behind the business decisions of Christian record labels, especially after the waves of acquisition by the major music conglomerates in the late twentieth century. Yet, he never dismisses the lived experience of the professionals, artists, and audiences who collectively create the industry. Again, Mall’s narrative position as a qualitative researcher deeply embedded within the culture he is studying serves this research particularly well.

Apart from oral histories with industry insiders, Mall also conducted extensive fieldwork at Christian music festivals such as Cornerstone and AudioFeed. Mall views these two events as excellent vantage points for resistance within the Christian music industry as they showcase niche acts and genres. In a milieu where a primary effect of “stronger commercial priority [is] the increasing homogenization of mainstream Christian music’s aesthetics” (79) what better place to investigate alternatives than a

mosh pit for a Christian hardcore act? I especially appreciated Mall's engagement with the work of British Cultural Studies scholarship and Dick Hebdige's work on subcultures in this discussion, as well as his succinct, lay-oriented explanation of that work (166-174).

I likewise appreciated Mall's insight into the phenomena of cross-over between fringe and mainstream as multi-layered and multi-directional, rather than as a one-way street. Readers may appreciate other aspects of the book such as its pace, tone, and the curated playlists of music mentioned in the book that allow readers to listen along as they read. The discussion of the band Mutemath (198-201) was particularly well done. The parallels between their career arc and the difficulties that the wider music industry faced at the turn of the twenty-first century were profound. Mutemath are also among the best examples of the complex cultural dynamics at play for a band of Christians who do not wish to be labeled as a Christian band.

This book is of obvious interest to scholars of popular culture and religion, and, due to its accessible writing style, may be of use in an undergraduate course on music business. For music industry programs at faith-based institutions it should be required reading as it will help students to better understand the historical and cultural factors that create the industry subset many of them hope to enter. As to the book's aspirations of informing an understanding of all niche music, the section on David Bazan (186-191) comes the closest to providing something more generalizable beyond the Christian market. Because Christian music is defined less by genre than by content it can be viewed as a microcosm. As such, niche markets *within* that microcosm are ideal units of analysis because they are small enough to be studied in-depth and thoroughly contrasted with their corresponding mainstream. If the book's subtitle was worded to imply that its findings would be relatively universal, I still think that claim is a bit of a stretch. But I also do not think that should take away from what it does contribute. *God Rock, Inc.* deeply contextualizes an important and understudied segment of popular music and helps us to better understand the complex intersections of economics, popular culture, and worldview.

Jason Lee Guthrie

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Jim Ruland. *Corporate Rock Sucks: The Rise and Fall of SST Records.* New York: Hachette Books, 2022. [hachettebooks.com](https://doi.org/10.25101/22.10)

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It's fascinating to learn just how much of the 1980s and '90s American alternative rock landscape could be attributed to one independent record label. Based in sundry offices mainly within the South Bay region of Los Angeles County (and currently in Taylor, Texas), SST Records spawned from necessity by members of hardcore punk pioneers Black Flag, whose 46-year career continues to be headed by inventive guitarist Greg Ginn, and would eventually grow from its modest, local roots to an internationally recognized label that was serendipitously situated in the right place at the right time on numerous occasions.

The fact that SST released titles from such powerhouse ubiquitous examples as New York's Sonic Youth, Massachusetts' Dinosaur Jr. and Buffalo Tom, Washington D.C.'s Bad Brains, the Twin Cities' Hüsker Dü, Arizona's Meat Puppets, and Seattle's Soundgarden and Screaming Trees—all of which would eventually land contracts on major labels after

their SST stays—proves that its national reach was far more impactful than its humble California headquarters would lead one to believe.

The global impact and history of SST's operation has been exhaustively—and interestingly—documented by author Jim Ruland in *Corporate Rock Sucks: The Rise and Fall of SST Records*, a 300-plus-page chronicle on a label that was founded during a time when performing as an independent rock outfit meant not much more than being a cover band, grinding out familiar sets of others' hit singles at the local watering hole.

Launching with the story of SST founder Ginn (who named the label after his amateur radio electronics company, Solid State Transmitters) and introducing the reader to his upbringings in a family that nurtured a do-it-yourself culture, Ruland is quick to stay focused on the development of the label, its initial partners, and the ultimate environment which led to its creation—as a record company serving as an outlet for a variety of underground music scenes, locales, and their respective performers. The book is presented in a largely chronological fashion, as Ruland divided its chapters into periodic eras by which SST had found itself challenged, whether it's the label versus MTV, college radio, the Hollywood scene, hardcore, New York, death, the Northwest, or simply history itself.

Through the chapters, Ruland dives deep into the various relationships between label personnel, bands, distributors, and outside entities that kept SST viable throughout its prime. Stories of how artists connected with the label make for intriguing anecdotes, as do the recollections of several employees who were present—and at times responsible—for the label's many musical milestones.

Ruland considers and presents diverse angles in the SST story, as there is both celebration and critique of the label, demonstrating strengths and slips. One major issue is documented in a chapter devoted to a period in which SST was embroiled in a record distribution legal battle with Unicorn Records (a subsidiary of MCA), which successfully filed an injunction against the release of new material and ultimately found SST heads Ginn and (former Black Flag bassist) Chuck Dukowski serving jail time for related violations. Ruland also reminds the reader that Ginn passed on the opportunity to sign arguably one of the biggest rock bands of the 1990s, Nirvana, who attempted to join the SST roster via the advocacy of Screaming Trees' late frontman Mark Lanegan, to no avail. We can only speculate, as Ruland notes, on what could have been SST's most popular

artist, had Nirvana been afforded the opportunity to release an SST album prior to its 1991 major-label sales smash, *Nevermind*.

Ruland digs into the label's vast catalog of nearly four hundred titles that ultimately broke out of its determinedly punk upbringings to offer a rather eclectic range of genres including blues, jazz, experimental, spoken word, and solo artists (some through SST offshoots such as New Alliance and Cruz Records). The label's abundant release schedule had slowed by the early 2000s and has since released mostly offerings from Ginn-associated projects over the past couple decades.

To be clear, the company is still operational, predominantly retailing its catalog along with apparel and accessories via its website, sstsuperstore.com. In fact, it is one of SST's T-shirt offerings from which the book's title is derived—the shirt, emblazoned via large font with the motto “Corporate Rock Still Sucks” on its front side, is currently available from SST's website.

Ruland is no stranger to penning books on punk rock, having co-authored *My Damage: The Story of a Punk Survivor* with former Black Flag vocalist Keith Morris and *Do What You Want: The Story of Bad Religion*, whose guitarist Brett Gurewitz founded the incredibly successful indie label Epitaph Records, after initially being inspired by SST's model, and called SST “the incubator of American hardcore” (357).

One must wonder if such an indie with the magnitude of influence and excitement of 80s-era SST could even sprout in today's recorded music environment of omnipresent online access. For a music industry class examining the innovators and progenitors of modern indie labels, Ruland's chronology could make for an interesting introductory read and subsequent discussion. However, it is probably best serving the type of reader whose ears were raised on a steady diet of selections from the heyday of SST's tapes, vinyl, and discs.

Waleed Rashidi

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Bobby Borg and Michael Eames. *Introduction to Music Publishing for Musicians: Business and Creative Perspectives for the New Music Industry*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021. rowman.com

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While it is not difficult to find books on how to be successful or how to make it in the music business, there are a limited number of books devoted specifically to understanding and navigating the business of music publishing. Authors Bobby Borg and Michael Eames add to the literature on music publishing in their 2021 book entitled *Introduction to Music Publishing for Musicians*. The book applies to the increasing number of independent artists and musicians who are releasing their music in today's digital music landscape. Borg is a former recording and touring artist with over thirty years of experience with major, independent, and "do it yourself" DIY labels. He is the author of three books geared toward musicians: *Music Marketing for the DIY Musician*, *Business Basics for Musicians*, and *The Musician's Handbook*. Borg holds a BA in Professional Music from Berklee College of Music and a master's degree in Communications Management from the University of Southern California. Eames is the

president and cofounder of Los Angeles-based PEN Music Group, Inc. and is the past president (2015-2018) of the Association of Independent Music Publishers. He has coauthored, along with Borg and three others, the book *Five Star Music Makeover: The Independent Artist's Guide for Singers, Songwriters, Bands, Producers, and Self Publishers*. Eames has also co-taught the course Introduction to Music Publishing (with Borg) at the college level.

Introduction to Music Publishing for Musicians is divided into seven sections and forty-nine total chapters. Section One covers copyright basics in chapters 1 through 9. The authors do an excellent job explaining the reasons behind protecting the works of creators. The specific topics include a definition of copyright, the exclusive rights that the U.S. copyright law grants to creators, works for hire, joint works, copyright duration, copyright registration, infringement, and sound recording copyrights. All are discussed in great detail in easy-to-understand language. As a publisher for thirty years myself, I did not fully agree with the statement that most publishers will agree to a reversion clause. This may have been prefaced by explaining that depending on the market, publishers may agree to a reversion. Publishing deals in the Nashville market rarely offer reversions of copyright. Creators do still have the right to terminate after thirty-five years, however, if they exercise the statutory termination right. The Nashville music businesses cluster has some unique aspects that other markets may not mirror, which include a more hands-on approach to working with and developing songwriters.¹ Publishers who are invested personally in their catalogs of songs may desire to reap the rewards of their efforts until the law requires them to assign the copyrights back to the creator. This issue is minor in the overall book, as the authors do explain reversions well. Section One ends with a strong explanation of recent copyright law legislation, which is necessary in the current era of music consumption through streaming.

Section Two delves into the types of income that music publishers receive for their works. The section is separated into eight chapters, 10 through 17, covering mechanical royalties, performance royalties, synchronization royalties, print royalties, electronic transmissions, and sub-publishing income. The authors do a wonderful job of explaining writer's share and publisher's share in a way that the average person could understand. The work also offers good tips for choosing a performing rights

organization (PRO) for new writers. Each of the other income sources is described well and it is clear that the authors are experts in their fields.

The book's third section, chapters 18 through 23, discusses a publisher's functions and the types of deals an artist or musician might encounter. This may be some of the most valuable information that the authors share with the reader. Creators need to know the industry norms in order to make solid decisions in their careers and feel confident that they have not entered into an unfair deal. The music industry can seem like treacherous waters full of sharks especially as a career is starting to blossom. Specific topics include song plugging, exclusive songwriter agreements, copyright reversion, synchronization agreements, and how to start your own publishing company. The authors are clear on what songwriters should realistically expect from their publishers. I particularly enjoyed chapter 20's explanation of advances as an illusion. Writers need to understand that any advance they receive from a publisher is an advance on their future royalties that will be recouped once royalties are earned. With the increase in the number of do-it-yourself (DIY) artists, many find themselves without a publisher and have the need to set up their own publishing entity. Chapter 22 outlines the process of setting up a DIY publishing company in great detail, which is valuable information for the songwriter or artist still searching for that publisher that will be their career champion.

Section Four covers some of the creative aspects of publishing in chapters 24 through 34. Topics such as preparing for the creative process, elements of popular songs, uniqueness, innovation, and how DIY artists can pitch and promote their music are included. While I am not sure that the elements of popular songs are necessary for this book, the DIY elements are extremely useful for new publishers. In the current era where mechanical royalty revenues are falling, many publishers are finding it necessary to seek additional revenue streams than traditional publishing companies enjoyed, which was mainly mechanical, performance, and synchronization income. Ownership of masters and marketing those masters can be an excellent additional revenue stream.

The book also provides high-quality real-life application through Section Five's chapters 35 through 45 in the form of interviews with experienced music industry professionals. The insight shared from creatives who have had successful careers is inspiring. The examples of those who have found their place in the music business despite its challenges help to make starting a career in the music business not such a daunting task. I

understand that the book is geared toward musicians and not towards those on the business side of music publishing, but I do believe that the book could have also included interviews with non-creatives and administrative people from the publishing world. The insight could be valuable for musicians. Many who desire a career in publishing are not musicians or artists. Additionally, including interviews from some Nashville publishers would help give a perspective on the market where songwriters who are not musicians or singers can find success.

Section Six, chapters 46 through 48, discusses the future of music publishing in the midst of technology changes and recent legislation. Of particular interest is the discussion on PROs, consent decrees, and pending legislative developments. The authors do an excellent job of explaining the issues and the possible outcomes. The Mechanical Licensing Collective (MLC) is also described in detail along with the challenges that the new system for streaming royalties is experiencing. As a publisher of past hits and earning songs, I have experienced many of my copyrights having incorrect information after the huge data dump into the new MLC database. Section Seven includes only chapter 49 and concludes the book with a summary of the main topics of the book. It also includes the final thoughts of the authors.

Overall, this book is a solid perspective on the business of music publishing. It is geared towards the creative to give insight into the various aspects of publishing of which musicians should be aware. As a veteran music publisher in the Nashville market, and a current music publishing teacher at the college level, I realize that what I desire in a music publishing text may be different than someone with experience in other markets. I have tried to bracket out that bias, while still pointing out key aspects that aren't necessarily congruent with all markets. I am always looking for a text that explains the publishing industry for the beginner that I could utilize in my courses. The authors do an excellent job of explaining the basics before getting into more complicated topics. I would recommend the book to all aspiring musicians and artists for a solid foundation on how music publishing works in the U.S.; however, I do wish that it included historical elements including the evolution of thought and laws leading to the protections that creators and publishers enjoy today. If used in a college course, the information would provide a solid foundation before discussing how the industry works in the current environment. Additionally, a discussion of the U.S. publishing market should include a section on

the Nashville market, which operates very differently from the other U.S. markets. The cultivation and service to songwriters by publishers and the symbiotic nature of the culture are major components of the local industry.² If future editions are considered, I would recommend the inclusion of these elements, to make a well-rounded text for the college level.

Dan Galen Hodges Jr.

Endnotes

1. Dan Galen Hodges Jr., “Cultural Implications of International Companies Acquiring Nashville Publishers,” *College Music Symposium* 62, no. 1 (2022): 69-81. <https://doi.org/10.18177/sym.2022.62.mbi.11560>.
2. Hodges, “Cultural Implications of International Companies Acquiring Nashville Publishers.”

In his almost thirty-year career in the music business, **DAN HODGES** has worked for BMG Music Publishing, Rick Hall’s FAME Music, and Murrah Music. As a song plugger, Hodges successfully placed songs on albums generating over 10 million units in sales in his career, including the hits “Where Would You Be” by Martina McBride and “I’m A Survivor” by Reba McEntire (TV theme for *Reba*), Billy Currington’s ASCAP 2008 Country Song of the Year “Good Directions,” and songs recorded by many other major label



acts. In addition to being a publisher, Hodges co-produced the XM radio top 5 hit “Mandolin Rain” for Josh Kelley and discovered and signed to their first publishing deals country hitmakers Josh Kear (multi-grammy

winner and 2013 ASCAP Songwriter of the Year) and Chris Tompkins (multi-grammy winner and writer of thirteen #1 country songs), among other successful Nashville writers.

Since 2008, Hodges has operated his own Music Row-based publishing company, Dan Hodges Music, LLC. The company has enjoyed two #1's and had songs recorded by many Nashville country artists including Rascal Flatts, Martina McBride, Keith Urban, Brad Paisley, Chris Young, Reba McEntire, Lee Brice, and Kelsea Ballerini (her #1 "dibs"), to name a few. DHM also opened a virtual branch of the company in Australia in 2015, where it has enjoyed six #1 country songs and over thirty major label cuts in the Aussie country music scene. Hodges has been a regular attendee of the international music publisher conference, MIDEM, which has led to subpublishing relationships all over the world and DHM songs being placed on major label acts in multiple countries including Italy, France, Sweden, Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom, and Germany.

He earned his Doctor of Business Administration/International Business degree from Liberty University. In the Fall of 2022, he assumed the role of Associate Professor at the University of Colorado Denver. Previously he taught as an adjunct and lecturer at Belmont University from 2016-2022.

