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Spring 3-23-2010

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Recommended Citation

McLean, Rachel; Oliver, Paul; and Wainwright, David, "Future of the music industries: Empowering the DIY artist through ICTs. A Habermasian view" (2010). *UK Academy for Information Systems Conference Proceedings 2010*. 37.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/ukais2010/37>

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Future of the music industries: Empowering the DIY artist through ICTs. A Habermasian view

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of the digital culture on the music industry through an analysis of official and unofficial websites, media reports and discussions with musicians.

Research Design - A critical social theory approach is adopted to examine structures and processes related to communication between artists, fans, the media, as well as commercial and independent labels. We draw upon Habermas' theory using the concept of 'communicative action' to inform an analysis of three vignettes or short case studies.

Findings - At first glance it would appear that technology has brought about greater opportunities for independent musicians to communicate, network, promote and distribute, which previously could not be widely published, and to organise against the commercial power of major labels (Majors).

Limitations of the study - In many spheres of the music industries this "empowerment" does not appear to be realised. For example, previous studies have shown that the domination of the Majors continues to impact on local music scenes to restrict and ultimately prevent the creative ideal deliver a situation that is necessary to empower independent musicians. Current media manipulation and corporate interests restrict and alienate independent musicians who often have more of an intellectual ownership and culture within their local music communities.

Practical Implications - Although steps to enable improved visibility and cooperation have been made we are still a long way off musicians having a powerful enough voice to organise

against the commercial power of the large labels and media conglomerates (e.g. Apple iTunes). The ideal speech situation remains elusive and the hegemonic state remains unchallenged.

Social Implications - Music continues to be commodified and fans are increasingly constructed as “consumers”; the ultimate power remains in mass media and broadcasting rather than independent “narrowcast” and DIY artistry.

Originality/value – This paper extends debate on the impact of the developing “digital culture” focusing on independent musicians and the music industries. It raises issues for further research in this area.

Keywords - Social Networking, Virtual Community, Social Media, Digital Culture, Music Industries, Critical Social Theory, Information Systems

Background and aim

The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of the digital culture on the music industry and musicians through analysis of official and unofficial websites and media reports, and discussions with musicians. At first glance it would appear that technology has brought about greater opportunities to communicate, to share views which previously could not be widely published, and to influence (Baym, 2007), or organise against the commercial power of the major record labels (McLeod, 2005; Kot, 2009). However, economic power, surveillance, censorship and control continue to impact on independent, or DIY, musicians to restrict and ultimately prevent the ideal speech situation that is necessary to empower musicians and promote greater independence and control over art and career.

In this paper a critical social theoretical (CST) approach is adopted to examine structures and processes related to communication amongst communities of musicians, their fans and the record labels. We posit that true social discourse amongst these communities, which should be increasingly facilitated in the digital society, is being controlled and regulated by big business, corporate and media interests in order to maintain economic control of the industry. In the terms of Jurgen Habermas this would be regarded as a ‘colonization of the Lifeworld’ (Habermas, 1987) where big Corporate interests (the system) are manipulating public opinion and freedom to speak openly or act independently within an overall goal of profit maximization for major record labels and the large media corporations.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Firstly we will explore the fragmentation of the music industry and the impact of technology. Next we outline the construct of DIY culture, then we will give an overview of Critical Social Theory which is used as a theoretical lens, before presentation and analysis of a number of vignettes leading to the conclusions.

Fragmentation of the Music Industries and the Impact of Technology

Information, and significantly, Web 2.0, technologies have facilitated creative developments globally in many disciplines. The impact of information and communication technologies has affected every aspect of our lives (Margot, 2004) from work, to home and leisure.

A number of researchers have discussed the emergence of new industries, networks and institutions based on the storage, sale, dissemination and use of information, as a key feature of later twentieth-century capitalist development (Scott 1986, Castells 1989, Lury 1993, Borja et al. 1997). While information has always been a key element of the production of any given product or service, a series of events has pointed to the emergence of distinct information economies. These have included developments in computer technology, the growth of postmodern globally integrated financial systems, convergence between corporate interests in the telecommunications and high-technology industries, state deregulation of media and communications sectors; and the appearance of new forms of dissemination, such as cable, the Internet and Web 2.0. Significantly, music has been described as an 'information industry', or even a 'content-proving' creative industry - alongside film, multimedia, publishing, TV, newspapers and graphic design. Like many other sectors, the competitive landscape of the music industries has dramatically changed over the last 10 years. Technology, particularly related to production and distribution, has significantly reshaped the industry. Slater (2000) states that 'The popular music industry is driven by technology, the music industry has been driven and occurred as a result of a new technology'.

Many key players have reworked their strategies based on technological advances primarily in information technology. Some of the strategic changes have been related specifically to new ways of business made possible by new technologies. However, much of the change has been in response to the evolving technical capabilities of customers and changes in the ways they listen to and buy music (Reed, 2004). Further, the use of information systems has broken down barriers between artist, promoter and manager. Communication has become easier and more productive because technology eliminates the need for face-to-face interaction. People

find it much more difficult to communicate in a professional manner when it relates to an area that they are passionate about. Therefore, through remote information sharing and communication via social network sites, blogs, websites and so on, people have the headspace to think clearly and precisely, to consider their “brand image” and what they wish to communicate without interference, censorship and corporate remodeling. These new forms of interaction condone less formal modes of communication and sit well with DIY artistry.

DIY Culture

Do-it-yourself (DIY) is a well known ethic based on self-reliance and exceeding one’s own expectations of what can be achieved with the tools at-hand (Bennett and Peterson, 2004). This perspective can be applied to almost any aspect of life ranging from home repairs to home recording. The DIY artist has multiple roles: musician, artist, manager, distributor as well as promoter (Oliver, 2009). All these roles are essential if he or she is to survive in the music industries. In terms of personality, the DIY artist is rebellious but not necessarily in an overtly political manner. The subject, content and sound of the music they create often places them outside of the commercial territory of the Majors

Spencer (2005) describes how she became fascinated by the DIY culture as a teenager and fell in love with idea of recording music or making art and passing it on to other people:

“I was excited by the thought of that you could use the resources available to you – a piece of paper, a battered guitar, a cheap tape-recorder – to cross the boundary between who consumes and who creates. It was empowering to realize that anyone, however amateur, could produce something which would be valued as a finished product” (Spencer, 2005, pp.226-227).

The DIY artist takes inspiration from the things around him or her and makes something that can be appreciated by others. This could be anything from a drawing to a recorded piece of music. However, the main reason that DIY is appealing to so many people is because there are no rules other than what an artist sets him or herself. Many artists collaborate with others within a community in order to save money or time. It is also satisfying to work with people of a similar mindset as this helps with creativity of an activity or project. From this DIY ethic people tend to forge a career from a life-long passion rather than simply lust for money.

At first glance it would appear that technology has brought about greater opportunities for the DIY artist to communicate, network, promote and distribute art, which previously could not be widely published, and to organise against the commercial power of major labels (Majors). Creative commons, with the strap line “it’s easy when you skip the intermediaries” (Creative Commons, 2009), as well as MySpace, Facebook, Feiyr, Rebeat and Soundcloud allow artists to share, communicate and even make small sums of money from their work, bypassing the system or commercial intermediaries and dealing directly with customers, fans and peers. However, deeper analysis of interactions, uses and media reports of the impact and adoption of technology within the music industry suggests that a true power shift has not taken place.

Critical Social Theory

Critical Social Theoretical is increasingly used as a lens to examine complex issues within the discipline of Information Systems and especially focusing on the usage, behaviours and power relations associated with collaborative working systems, enterprise systems and email (Ngwenyama and Lee, 1997; Lee, 1994; Lyytinen and Klein, 1985; Cukier et al, 2003; Waring and Wainwright, 2002; McLean, 2008). These studies have provided an important theoretical contribution in different IS application contexts whilst focusing mostly on an interpretation of Habermas’s core work relating to a substantive theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984; 1987). In most cases this has been simplified into frameworks utilizing the constructs of ‘validity claims’.

An interpretation by Cukier (2003) based on the work of Forester (1983) uses a framework that comprises: truth (the propositional content is true or accurate); sincerity (the speaker is honest and means what (s)he says); clarity (what is said is intelligible and comprehensible) and legitimacy (what the speaker says is right or morally appropriate with regard to existing norms or values). Judgments on the degree that speech acts or utterances meet these validity claims lead to a pragmatic utopian situation for communication termed by Habermas as an ‘ideal speech situation’ (Habermas, 1984). The closer to the ideal where all parties in the discourse (whether individuals, groups, organisations, spheres of society or public bodies) can communicate fairly, justly and without fear of prejudice or domination leads to a system that may be considered to be more rational and based on a reflection of norms, values and beliefs which are representative of the participants concerned. According to Habermas,

distortions of these validity claims can lead to disorder, mistrust and a collapse of the legitimacy of a group, organisational or political system (for example a harmonious relationship between artists and major labels, or artists and fans in the case of this study).

There are many high profile cases, widely reported in the media, of disagreements between artists and record companies. For example, George Michael was involved in a bitter court battle with Sony, which ended in 1995, “three years, scores of acrimonious meetings and millions of pounds later” (Garfield, 1995). More recently, Jarvis Cocker, singer songwriter of Indie band Pulp, politely declined an invitation to extend their four album record deal with Island Records. In contrast to Michael’s highly publicized fallout with Sony, Cocker was “attempting to be as straightforward as possible about events without boring the arse off everyone” (NME, 2002). Analysis of these cases through the lens of Habermas’ communicative action theory points to a power imbalance, domination of labels over artists, disorder, mistrust and ultimately a collapse of the working relationship and agreement.

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have long been heralded as a “leveler”. eCommerce promised to level out the retail playing field enabling smaller companies to compete on equal terms with large companies; price comparison web sites made it a simple step for customers to switch bank, utility supplier or insurance company. In reality customers stayed loyal to trusted brand names and long term service providers (McLean and Blackie, 2004). This research suggests that the impact of technology upon the music industry, with all its promise to redistribute power and put artists in control and in touch with fans, has to some extent become part of the myth of technology as emancipator, empowering the oppressed to successfully challenge the major power holders and redefine the relationship on a level playing field. The following sections will illustrate this through vignettes, drawing on media reports, user generated content sites (UGCs) and face-to-face interviews.

Vignettes

Sandi Thom

This vignette begins with a media recount of how Sandi Thom “shot to fame”, and the number one chart spot, “thanks to the internet”. The following was reported in the Daily Mail:

“Singer Sandi Thom is heading for a No 1 hit. Three months ago, Sandi Thom was just another struggling singer dreaming of pop stardom. Now she is on course to have this week's number one record - thanks to the Internet. The story of how Miss Thom landed a £1 million record deal after broadcasting concerts from her flat over the world wide web has become the stuff of music industry legend” (Born, 2006).

Thom's official online biography www.sandithom.com (no longer available online) stated that she was discovered when she 'webcast' a series of concerts from her basement flat in Tooting, South London:

“The first night, 70 viewers watched online and the next it was up to 670. By day ten Miss Thom was performing to up 70,000 - including fans as far away as Russia and the U.S. - and had every major record label at her door. She eventually signed a £1 million deal with RCA. Her debut single I Wish I Was a Punk Rocker (With Flowers in My Hair) sold 40,000 copies in a week and quickly rose to the number one spot.” (Sunday Times, 2006)

The Sunday times quoted Thom as saying “a web tour is basically what you do when you have a lack of money and no car.... With the webcam, it's a great opportunity to play in front of the whole world — and cost- effective.” And reported that “The blossoming success of Thom's web tour illustrates how a new generation of unknown singers and bands are connecting with fans directly through the internet before achieving conventional chart success.” (Sunday Times, 2006)

This single was eventually listed as the 47th biggest selling UK single from a female artist since 2000 according to the Official Charts Company as of January 2009 (Diddy, 2009). An analysis of media reports of Sandi Thom's sudden stardom initially suggests that technology and a DIY approach facilitated Thom's success. Webcasting gigs from her own basement would suggest true DIY artistry at minimal cost with no large financial investment and no need for support from the Majors and their PR machine. The artist communicating directly with the fans; something that anyone could do.

Significantly however, the hype surrounding Thom and her low cost self publicity soon began to be questioned in internet chatrooms and on blogs by fans with suspicions that Thom had

the backing of a PR company, and that what appeared as DIY artistry was in reality the result of a hard marketing campaign. Information Technology (IT) experts began to comment and demystify the technology, arguing that the cost of the equipment alone could not be met by an impoverished DIY musician. "The webcast figures are so bogus it's unbelievable," one IT expert is quoted as saying. "Do you know how much bandwidth (internet capacity) is required to support 70,000 (watching a live broadcast)? Bandwidth costs money. This whole thing is total bull****", again reported in the Daily Mail (Diddy, 2009). At the same time, it began to come to light that Thom already had a publishing deal with Windswept Pacific Music, as well as a hitech website, a manager (Ian Brown) and the backing of a large PR company (Quite Great). As more detail about Thom's "instant fame" leaked out it became evident that her success was largely the result of a 'viral marketing' campaign. Thousands of fans were offered free copies of Miss Thom's album in return for sending messages encouraging others to listen to her single through MySpace (a social networking website widely used by musicians). Others connected to Thom admitted buying multiple copies of the song via iTunes in an attempt to push it up the charts (Diddy, 2009).

In February 2009, Thom split with Sony (RCA) stating that the label had put her under too much pressure to finish her second album too quickly and that the Label had placed demands on her to change lyrics (Harris, 2009). It did not go unnoticed, however, that in an interview before the release of the album Thom is quoted as saying "I'm surprised how long it has taken to make this new album. It has been like therapy" (Daily Record, 2008).

Analysis

Evidence suggests that Sandi Thom was not the overnight success challenging the power of the music industry Majors and PR machines, and redefining the relationship between artist and fans that she initially appeared to be. Ironically it was the technology that facilitated the creation of the myth that began its deconstruction. This technology brought together disparate fans to discuss the validity of the claim that Thom was a DIY success, and their discussions uncovered more of the fictitious claims made. The Times and Sunday Times reporting on the Thom phenomena in March 2006 were forced to revisit the story and present the new version of events by May (Sunday Times, 2006; Times, 2006), whilst The Guardian debated whether Thom was "a self-made internet superstar or simply the next in a proud tradition of rock'n'roll PR swindles" (The Guardian, 2006). In terms of Habermas and Critical Social Theory it is evident that Thom's use of technology as a DIY artist did not

challenge the hegemonic state and create the ideal speech situation. Close analysis of the vignette presented above shows that instead, distortions of these validity claims led to disorder, mistrust and a “collapse of the legitimacy of a group”, the harmonious relationship between artist, major label, and fans in the case of this example. Thom split with Sony (RCA) and the backlash against her from fans began to show.

Laura Victoria Vignette

Laura Victoria is a successful DIY artist, originally from Newcastle upon Tyne, now based in London. She seamlessly uses social networking sites, community discussion boards, a personal website as well as other tools to help her with promotion, networking, communication and managing fans. It appears that she uses the information to help her work independently rather than sign with a major record company, delivering all creative projects in the true spirit of DIY.

Her ultimate ambition is to record an album and gain more commercial success and so she has used her network of local musicians to record songs at a high standard but at a very low cost. This demonstrates that Laura has been independent, as she explains that “it is professional equipment but we are just finding the way ourselves really”.

However, when it comes to the actual management of this recording, there is a slightly different outcome. Laura has paid for a professional business consultant to facilitate photography as well as mixing of the album recording. She has basic Internet-based skills, enough to use a MySpace account. But, she did not have the ability to build her own website and so this was done by a professional web designer:

“I’m bringing other people in who I’m paying to do my website ... yeah, and the guy who was designing the website asked me to find websites that I liked, so I did and I showed him them.”

On the surface it appears that Laura has been successful through her musical endeavours as a DIY artist using complex social networking sites, managing fans, as well as communicating and networking with people; therefore, finding out how this was achieved is an important

aspect of the research. However, she reveals that at the back end she has a professional business consultant to help her make a business plan.

“I’m going to meet up with a record company guy and have a chat ... I’ve been keeping via email, and he’s going to try to get me some gigs ... I’m going to send it to this guy in America who apparently mastered Ani DiFranco’s album.”

There are obvious gaps in her business knowledge to such an extent that she needs consultancy to creatively manage this project. Therefore, the process is not truly DIY and demonstrates a need to integrate a wide variety of business knowledge and experience into the process in order to be commercially successful. Of course, this moves away from the ethics of DIY artistry, and so away from artist self empowerment. Laura Victoria is excited about the meeting with “a record company guy” with the promise of “some gigs” and remastering of her recordings by “this guy in America who apparently mastered Ani DiFranco’s album.” The limitations of DIY artist success and the lack of industry knowledge and marketing force Laura Victoria to pursue the ultimate musician’s goal of signing to a record company.

Analysis

This vignette suggests that lack of truth and clarity are evident as a result of Laura Victoria’s change in focus towards commercial success, thus preventing facilitation of the ideal speech situation and reaffirming the hegemonic state of the power of Major labels over Indies and artists. For example, Victoria’s initial success as a DIY artist and community-based folk musician is diverted towards a need for commercial recognition as she looks to widen her fan base it becomes impossible to achieve her goals without professional support of some kind. Her self-taught, DIY knowledge and skills can only take her so far, which means unless she contracts people in to do technical jobs – photography, website building - she will be limited in how she develops as an artist in the future and commercial success will remain elusive.

Spotify

Spotify is a peer-to-peer music streaming (real time, not download) service that allows access to tracks found by artist, title, album, label, or created play list. The difference between a download “shop” and a streaming service is that the music is listened to without being

downloaded or “owned” by the listener. Spotify, developed in Sweden, was launched for public access in October 2008, and offered free accounts to the public in February 2009 when it was launched in the UK (Sehr, 2009). Spotify is funded by paid subscriptions and advertisements played by the Spotify player at intervals in between songs. This service is completely legal. Spotify has permission to stream music from all the major record companies (Majors), including EMI, Time Warner and Sony BMG. Indeed there has been a huge amount of investment, and in turn profit for the Majors. Spotify has been described as “sexy, incredibly user-friendly and the future – maybe even the saviour – of legal music consumption” (Guardian Music Blog, 2009); a true “fair trade” company. However, as Spotify has become more established, its business model has been held up to scrutiny, critics arguing that it is unsustainable (Lewis, 2009). Revenue is generated through advertisements between songs. These advertisements appear to be becoming longer and more frequent. In February 2009 adverts were reported as lasting 15 seconds, and playing at half-hour intervals (McCormick, 2009). By May 2009 this had increased to 30 seconds in length. “The interval between audio adverts is not constant, and it isn’t unusual to hear an advert after every song” (Harrison, 2009). Alternatively the user can pay a monthly fee of £9.99 British pounds for a “premium” membership, and hear songs at higher quality with no advertisements in between. It is difficult to locate statistics on the proportion of Premium members. Media reports state that very few premium memberships have been taken out (Cellan-Jones, 2009) whilst Spotify representatives only make general statements such as “a decent proportion” of members are paying members (Brown, 2009).

The egalitarian principals initially espoused by Spotify have also been brought into question in recent months. When a Spotify representative was asked if they would feature music by unsigned artists the way We7 does, he replied “no, but ... all they would need to do was to sign up to a label and they'd get on the site.” As many artists struggling to get a “recording deal” know, this is no minor task. Further, the service has recently been criticised for failing to compensate independent artists fairly. Helienne Lindvall of The Guardian reported that “indie labels...as opposed to the majors and Merlin members, receive no advance, receive no minimum per stream and only get a 50% share of ad revenue on a pro-rata basis.” (Lindvall, 2009). A high profile case in Sweden, saw Magnus Uggla a musician “well established since the late 70s” withdraw his music from the service. It was reported that Uggla (2009) wrote on his blog (in Swedish) that, after six months on the site he'd earned “what a mediocre busker could earn in a day”. When he found out that Sony had 5.8% equity in Spotify he removed all

his songs “pending an honest service”. Bob Dylan has also removed the bulk of his collection from Spotify this move was shrouded in mystery and was the subject of much debate on blogs and forums, for example Word Magazine’s Blog “The Word” (Forde, 2009). Following the news that Dylan had “gone from Spotify” a member posted the following:

XXXXXXX has a sharp intake

of breath as he confirms this is indeed the case, although he is relieved to note that the cover of 'bob dylan's dream' by the mighty roger whittaker remains !
are all sony artists about to disappear - I think we should be told!

This post highlights the lack of communication and clarity in the relationship between Spotify and music fans. A service which appears to empower fans, giving them choice, and putting them in control of the music they listen to fails to communicate with fans but instead is itself controlled by the commercial interests of larger more powerful partners (e.g. Sony) and focuses on it’s own commercial interests.

Analysis

In this vignette evidence suggests that lack of truth and clarity, and the domination of commercial interests again prevent the facilitation of the ideal speech situation, maintaining the hegemonic state of the power of Major labels and commercial investment over Indies and artists. For example, there is a strong possibility that revenue, which comes from a possible sale of shares by the label, would end up in the proverbial “blackbox” (non-attributable revenue that remains with the label rather than being distributed to artists) (Lindvall, 2009). The major conglomerates are profiting from the work of the artists who gain little from the service provided by Spotify. Through Spotify, music is commoditised and used as a vehicle for commercial advertisements. In turn fans are increasingly constructed as “consumers” not just of the music they choose to listen to but of a range of products and services marketed to them by Spotify’s commercial sponsors.

Analysis of Vignettes

ICTs especially social media and mobile technologies facilitate high levels of time and space free connectivity which serve to strengthen disparate communities with a common interest.

The music community and industry has experienced greater opportunities to connect, communicate and organise as a result of the increasing prevalence and domestication of ICTs. It is not uncommon to see fans listening to tracks released solely on the internet over a mobile phone, or listening to an unsigned band on MySpace. It is easier than ever before to share a newly discovered track or band with a friend and new bands can gain prevalence through word of mouth marketing via ICTs. However, the commercial opportunities this presents to media conglomerates have not gone unnoticed. Corporate interests continue to be served. Fans are still controlled both through how they are constructed in the media (reports of the “no pay generations”, illegal downloading and piracy (Rajan, 2008, Sweney, 2006) and what is broadcast to them. Empowerment through connectivity has not happened. Although steps to enable free communication have been made we are still a long way off music fans and independent artists having a powerful enough voice to organise against the commercial power of the Majors and media conglomerates (Apple, Sony). In Foucauldian terms “(the music fan and the artist to some extent) is the object of information, never a subject in communication” (Foucault, 1995) as the ultimate power remains in mass media and broadcast rather than “narrowcast”. Music fans can communicate with each other but not with the Major labels, Celebrity artists, or Service Directors, restricting any power promised by connectivity through social media. Music fans continue to be constructed as consumers exploited and controlled. The hegemonic state remains unchallenged as the ideal speech situation remains elusive.

In terms of Habermas’s theory of communicative action and the idealised notion of a free speech situation our example vignettes demonstrate that ICTs and the services provided through them may involve large distortions of communications that the public spheres may not necessarily be aware of: being under the impression that they have free speech, a democratic voice and the means to publicise opinions. We can see that in each case concerns arise over each element in Habermas’ “ideal speech situation”; Truth (is the propositional content true and accurate) where vested interests are at work to promote rumour, suspicion, prejudice, propaganda or false information. Sincerity (the speaker means what they say). The Clarity (whether the messages are intelligible and comprehensible) is questionable when information is controlled and leaked out by power holders at will. The last validity claim of legitimacy (utterances are morally appropriate with regard to existing norms and values) can also be disputed. Table 1 below provides illustrative examples from each vignette.

While it is true to say that ICTs provide access to Social Networking Sites, Blogs and forums for music communities these communication spaces are not democratic forums and do not represent ideal speech situations.

Validity Claim	Laura Victoria	Sandi Thom	Spotify
Truth and Sincerity: the propositional content is true or accurate; the speaker is honest and means what (s)he says	Laura Victoria appears to be a successful DIY artist but in fact aspires to be commercial. There is a contradiction as Victoria manages her creative activities, such as recording, but overall is managed by a professional.	The entire premise that Thom became famous purely as a result of webcasting gigs from her basement appears to be untrue. Thom contradicting herself over how long it took to make an album and over her support of Scottish Nationalists.	The egalitarian philosophy that “all artists” are equal for Spotify was revealed as an untruth as Spotify stated they would not include artists not signed to a label. The truth about the “disappearing artists” from Spotify’s playlist is elusive.
Clarity: what is said is intelligible and comprehensible.	There was a “mystique” as to whether or not she is DIY or commercially managed.	The “mystique” surrounding internet technology at this time meant that fans did not have “clarity”. Few understood what was needed to webcast a gig to 70000 viewers.	Free membership by “invitation only”. This created a mystique and aura of “exclusivity”. In truth numbers had to be limited as the technological infrastructure could not cope with demand.
Legitimacy: what the speaker says is right or morally appropriate with regard to existing norms or values.	Bringing in paid professionals to work on aspects of Victoria’s artist management, such as a website, mixing of album and photography.	Downloading multiple copies of a track from iTunes to ensure it reaches No.1. Numbers of webcast viewers greatly exaggerated.	Major labels actually own 18 % of Spotify shares. The artists receive none of the profits. Ugga removed his music “pending a more honest service”

Table 1 Illustrates how each of these cases do not meet Habermas’ validity claims to enable the “ideal speech situation” which redefines power relations.

Our three vignettes of recent events demonstrating the interactions between business interests, media power and musicians and music fans demonstrate examples of how these inequalities start to emerge and grow. We can see that increasing cynicism due to the

domination of business interests abusing fan loyalty can lead to disturbances with cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization. Public spheres such as fans discussion forums start to lose meaning, collective identities are undermined by increasing fragmentation of subgroups of fans with differing viewpoints and there is a rupture of tradition. An increasing sense of 'anomie' sets in where the fans feel divorced from the strategy, culture, operational running and musician/fan interactions. This then leads to growing alienation from the way that the music industry functions.

In our examples we have shown how the use of ICTs can be used to actively promote democratic discussion and interaction amongst fans and stakeholders in the music industry. Conversely or perversely however, they can also be used to constrain, infiltrate or manipulate discussion and commercial activity. This plays into the hands of the large Corporate, State and Media interests.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the ultimate power remains with the major labels, mass media and broadcasting rather than independent "narrowcast" and DIY artistry. Music continues to be commodified and fans continue to be constructed as "consumers". A similar study which focused on communities of football supporters (McLean & Wainwright, 2009) found little to support the argument that technology has brought about greater opportunities to communicate, to share views which previously could not be widely published, and to influence, or organise against the commercial power of the major companies and media conglomerates. However, an examination of communities of musicians does suggest that technology has, to an extent, helped to facilitate the DIY culture and empower communities of independent musicians. DIY artists are connecting, coming out of the oppression of late-20th century into a new time for collaboration and optimism. As they become more entrepreneurial and understand the mechanics of how the industries work, their potential to challenge the power of the majors and to become true DIY artists slowly increases. Artists may attempt to seek education or training to empower them to become a true DIY artist employing the improved technological tools available to them. The changes within the music industry and behaviour of those who buy and listen to music may prompt a move away from traditional "commercial success" of artists. Independent musicians may indeed learn to harness the power of ICTs. Could this be the beginnings of a revolution?

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