Working for the AI Man: Algorithmic Rents, Accumulation by Dispossession and Alien Power

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A Statement

"There is no evidence that there was ever a time when recorded music was the basis of substantial income for large numbers of musicians, even when total revenues were higher, in the 1990s.”

(Hesmondhalgh et al. 2021: 18)

Introduction

- that A.I. is a mirror and not a master (Press 2022)
- A.I. distorts the working and productive process
- Core capitalist approach

Altering Production

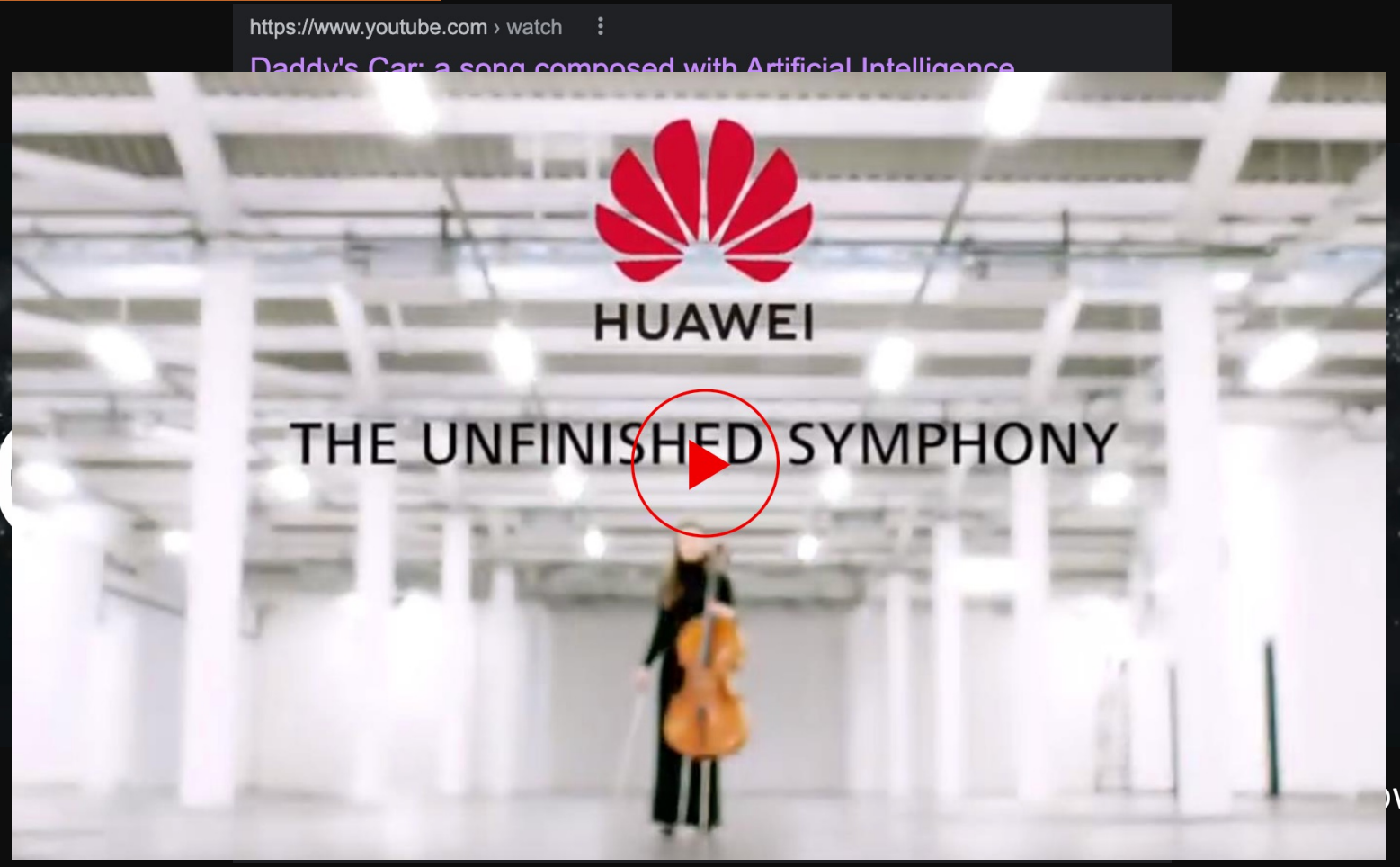
1. AI was **not easily decomposable** (not easy to tweak individual musical components)
2. was **not context-aware** (not fully aware of the musical context it was generating for)
3. **not easily steerable** (not easy to request for the music to bear a certain mood or effect).

(Huang et al. 2020, original emphasis)

Altering Production

adopting a “generate then curate rate approach”
(Deruty et al. 2022, original emphasis)

A.I. Production



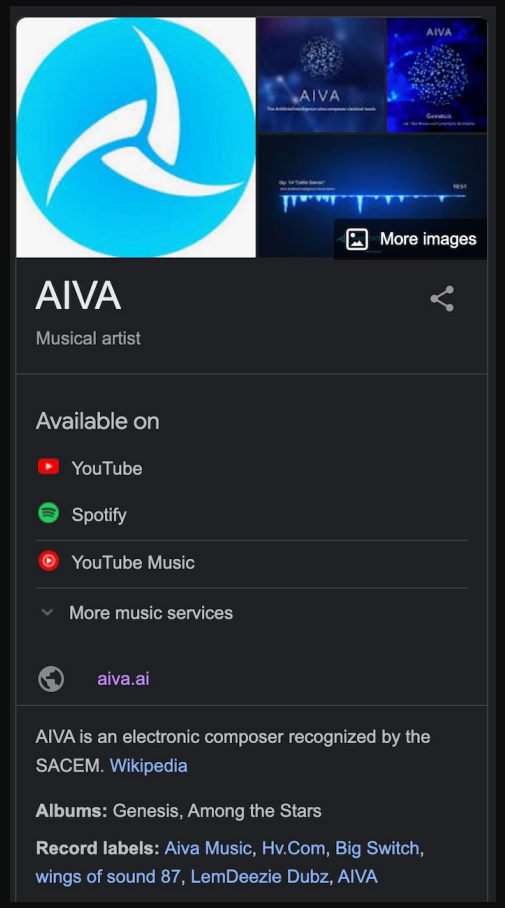
Davis (2019);
Huawei (n.d.)

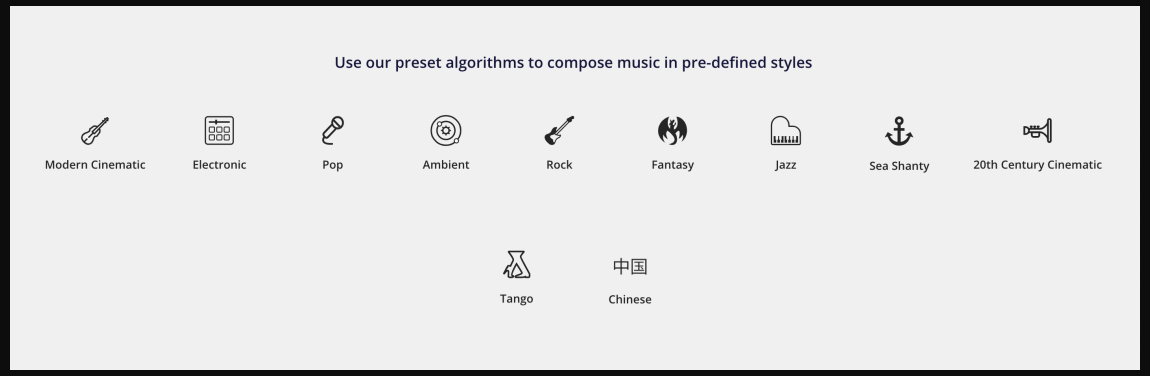
w (2021)

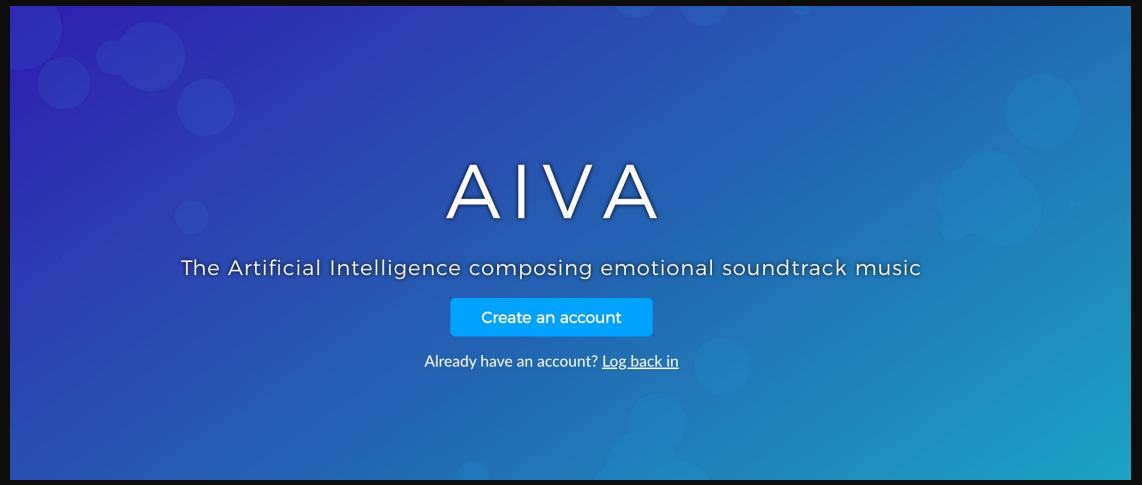
Distorting the Worker

“the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine” (Marx 1976: 798)

AIVA







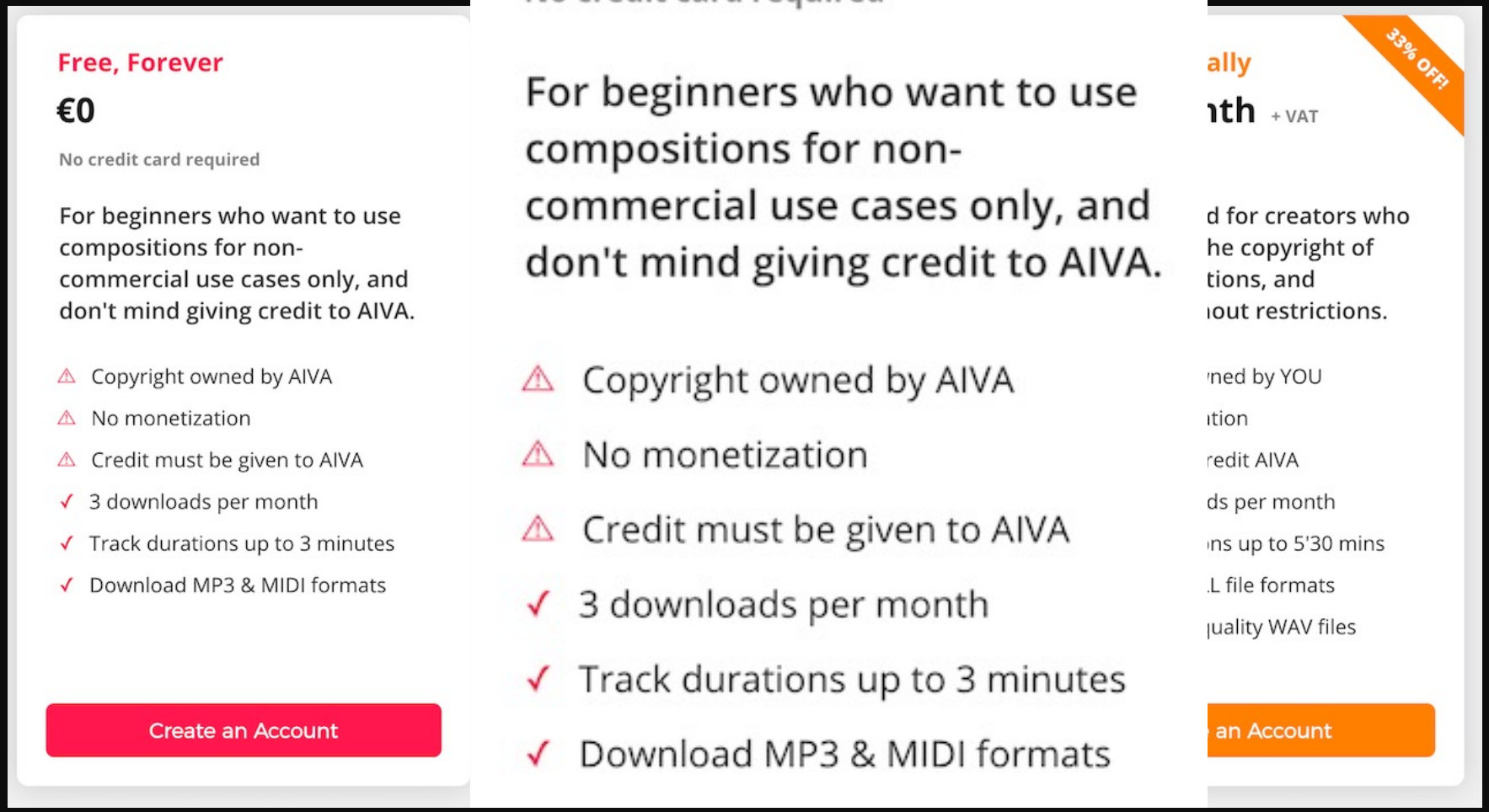
Offert and Phan describe this as a “technique”, as a means of “putting words in the user’s mouth.” (Offert and Phan 2022: 2)

See Clancy (2022: 45-46) for artist Holly Herndon’s perspective on this matter.

ALIENATION 1: NOT OWNING THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

- algorithmic rents (Boon 2022; Zuboff 2019)
- Non-ownership of the tool reveals process of alienation
- Fisher describes, is "both a pre-condition for exploitation and the result thereof." (Fisher 2016)
- AIVA removes the ability of users to own the means of production

ALIENATION 2: CO UCTION



ALIENATION 2: CONTROLLING PRODUCTION

Under a Free Plan

- You may use the tracks that are created under a Free plan for non-commercial purposes. That includes ANY use cases that are meant to be non-for-profit, and that are not promoting any commercial activity in any way.
- The copyright of the tracks you create is owned by AIVA
- You MUST give credit to AIVA when using the track. For example, if you are publishing a video on Youtube with some music composed by AIVA under a Free Plan, you can add the following line in the description of your video:

Under a Standard Plan

You can use the tracks for monetized content only on YouTube, Twitch, Tik Tok and Instagram.

- The copyright of the tracks you create is owned by AIVA
- You DO NOT need to give credit to AIVA when using the track

ALIENATION 2: CONTROLLING PRODUCTION

- work is also ingested by the machine
- machine learns from this unaccounted for labor at all tiers
- difficult for any user, especially at the highest subscription tier, to obtain a novel compositional or production advantage
- produces an improvement ‘benefit’ for all users, especially the company

ALIENATION 3: ACCUMULATION BY DISPOSSESSION

- free and standard tier do not own their own copyrights
- free and standard tier users are dispossessed of their copyrights by AIVA
- accumulated for revenue generation opportunities such as synchronization
- AIVA as a competitor in the creative space

ALIENATION 3: ACCUMULATION BY DISPOSSESSION

- music publisher paid a fee to the composer to acquire the copyright in their musical compositions
- publisher would sell the works to performers who needed songs.
- sheet music returned greater revenues from show and stage song catalogues
- lucrative returns from radio and stage performance permitted the publisher to pay a ‘royalty’ percentage back to the composer.

(summarised from Rutter 2016: 100)

ALIENATION 4: COMPOSING WITH INFLUENCE

- Huang and colleagues's (2020) three observable difficulties which AIVA attempts to solve
- Composing with Influence (CWI).
- CWI means that a user, at any tier, can upload a track or MIDI file to 'influence' AIVA's composition.
- The question to be asked here is: where does this track come from?

ALIENATION 4: COMPOSING WITH INFLUENCE

- commercially released track - breach of copyright
- MIDI file scraped from the internet (LAKH – Raffell (n.d.)) – copyright infringement
- Especially if an orphan file i.e. owner cannot be identified
- User own track – infringes their own rights

ALIENATION 4: COMPOSING WITH INFLUENCE

- CWI - alienates all rights holders
- CWI music at the free or standard tiers will be owned by AIVA
- ingested by the machine
- Improves machine by proxy

ALIENATION 4: COMPOSING WITH INFLUENCE

"Decisions-embedded-in-design [that] have significant ramifications."
(Caplan et al. 2018)

ALIEN POWER: CONCLUSION

“the machines must not be the property of the producer, nor of the associated producers, but of an alien power.”

(Braverman 1999: 159)

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