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DECENTRALIZING THE MUSIC INDUSTRY: NEW MEDIA CREATE GATEWAYS FOR
INDEPENDENT MUSICIANS

by

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B.F.A., Southern Illinois University, 2011

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Master of Science

in the field of Professional Media and Media Management

Approved by:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout most of the 20th century, major record labels were the gatekeepers to mainstream music. They controlled every aspect of the music industry, from artist recruitment through final music production and distribution. The barriers to entry for unsigned musicians and independent record labels allowed a few major recording labels to create an oligopoly within the industry, stamping out any competition they saw as a threat to their profits. Musicians had relatively no choice but to sign with a major record label if they wanted to pursue music careers.

However, technological progress and the creation of new media near the turn of the 21st century caused major disruptions to the traditional methods previously used by record labels to maintain control over music production, distribution, and monetization. Digital advances allowed consumers to gain more control over how they accessed music online, and independent musicians began to seek opportunities created by these new digital media.

This research aims to explore how recent advances in technology and the creation of new media have disrupted traditional production, distribution, and monetization strategies utilized by major record labels, and how technology has helped to create gateways for unsigned musicians. The media theories of Marshall McLuhan and Raymond Williams will be discussed in regards to the relation between new media and society, as well as copyright arguments by activist Lawrence Lessig. Research methodology will consist of three separate case studies, each focusing on a new medium that has affected the recording industry.

The first case study will provide an in-depth look at how peer-to-peer file sharing sites changed the way listeners gained access to music files, the impact this had on major record labels, and how members of the recording industry responded. The second case study will

explore online music streaming services and the effects these platforms have on music democratization, piracy, royalties, and the codependency that exists between major record labels and big tech companies. The final case study will examine social networking sites and video streaming platforms, covering issues of piracy and copyright infringement, attempts at collaboration between technology companies and record labels, and the communication and marketing tools social networking sites provide unsigned musicians. Each of these case studies will highlight consistent themes of piracy and copyright infringement while underscoring the constant discord between a centralized versus decentralized music industry.

These three historical analyses will inform the creation of an integrated marketing and distribution strategy for unsigned musicians to utilize. The project will be based on a small acoustic duo, though the marketing and distribution procedures can be applied to other unsigned musicians as well. This strategy will cover branding and visual identity, utilizing an omni-channel marketing plan, and incorporating a social media platforms and music streaming services. It will cover how to distribute music to existing fans and methods to grow their fan base to reach new audiences. This plan will also include ways to monetize creative endeavors, maximizing the impact of their marketing efforts, so that the duo may continue doing what they are passionate about: creating music.

CHAPTER 2

CASE STUDY: PEER-TO-PEER FILE SHARING

WHAT IS PEER-TO-PEER FILE SHARING?

Peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing sites are online platforms that allow users to share electronic files directly with other users, often free of cost. Though other software allowed users to share files online had existed in different formats for a few decades, such as File Transfer Protocol (FTP), Internet Relay Chat (IRC), online bulletin board systems (BBS), and Usenet, it wasn't until the late 1990s and early 2000s that P2P sites began surfacing online, providing centralized server systems for users to share electronic files openly and easily with all other visitors on the platform.

P2P sites allowed users to share digital music files directly with others. The creation and public distribution of mp3 files, compressed digital audio files that could be shared and downloaded quickly and easily from the internet, made this a popular alternative for music fans to gain access to their favorite music. Users did not have to upload files to a server, but instead were able to connect directly to other users' computers to access their mp3 libraries — hence the term “peer-to-peer file sharing.” Registered users would enter the song they wanted to download into the search bar, and the P2P site would compile a list of files by that name that were accessible from other users. The user was then able to choose the file they wanted, and download it from any other account that had it. This allowed the public to collect very large catalogs of music files that could be played on their home computers, downloaded onto mp3 players, or burned to writable CDs without payment.

Such P2P sites as LimeWire and Kazaa popped up in the early 2000s, but it was their predecessor, Napster, that not only had the most success, but also drew the most attention from

the recording industry. Founded in 1999, Napster was the first of these P2P platforms to gain mass popularity, primarily among college students. In 2000, it was reported that “73 percent of college students surveyed by research firm Webnoize said they used Napster's controversial song-swap software at least once a month,” (Staff, 2000). The simplicity Napster provided users in collecting music files made it the prominent choice for music enthusiasts, gaining over 80 million users around the globe at the height of its popularity. The Guardian reported that by 2000, approximately 14,000 songs were being downloaded from Napster every minute (2013).

DISRUPTING TRADITIONAL MUSIC DISTRIBUTION METHODS

The ease with which files could be shared on Napster and other P2P sites provided a popular avenue for fans to cost-effectively access huge digital libraries of music by their favorite bands and musicians. Files were shared directly between fans, causing a major disruption in music distribution previously under tight control of the recording industry. Record labels had long been the gatekeepers of music distribution to the public, but with the technological advances of P2P file sharing sites, their grip was loosening, as music consumers now had a new way to acquire the music they loved. Music fans no longer needed to purchase full albums through traditional means, such as CDs or vinyl records, but rather could download only the single from an album they wanted to hear — free of charge.

As Napster grew in popularity, the recording industry (including record labels as well as mainstream musicians) saw their profits from album sales plummet. In a study published on the Recording Industry Association of America’s (RIAA) website, researchers Martin Pietz and Patrick Waelbroeck concluded, “Our cross-section regression confirms their fear: we find that music downloading could have caused a 10% reduction in CD sales worldwide in 2001” (Pietz, 2004). With profits from album sales taking a nosedive thanks to the new media, plus the threat

of losing control over music distribution and promotion, members of the recording industry took defensive action. Rather than trying to work with the file sharing platform to find a solution that worked for both the recording industry and music fans, they chose to take legal action. In December of 1999, the RIAA filed a lawsuit on behalf of several recording companies against Napster for the incredible sum of \$20 billion, citing copyright infringement and music piracy as the basis for the suit. Not only did the RIAA sue Napster, but they also targeted the company's financial backers, including German media company Bertelsmann — owner of BMG Music.

Not long after the RIAA filed their lawsuit against Napster, megastar musicians began to take action, too. In early 2000, heavy metal band Metallica filed a highly publicized lawsuit against Napster, and rapper Dr. Dre sued the company shortly after. Both Metallica and the RIAA took things even farther, though, by choosing to go after fans and Napster users directly. Invoking the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), which criminalizes technology that evades digital rights management and penalizes copyright infringement, Metallica took legal action against their fans, resulting in over 300,000 Napster users getting blocked from the website due to downloading the band's songs. The RIAA also took legal action against Napster users and other peer-to-peer file sharing sites' users for several years following their Napster case. According to a report by Wired Magazine in 2008, "It was five years ago Monday the Recording Industry Association of America began its massive litigation campaign that now includes more than 30,000 lawsuits targeting alleged copyright scofflaws on peer-to-peer networks.

"The targets include the elderly, students, children and even the dead. No one in the U.S. who uses Kazaa, LimeWire or other file sharing networks is immune from the RIAA's investigators, and fines under the Copyright Act go up to \$150,000 per purloined music track."

(Kravets, 2009). The RIAA ended their lawsuit campaign in 2008; however, according to their website, individuals that are caught illegally obtaining copyrighted music may receive a copyright infringement notice and may be subject to being sued in the future if the piracy continues (RIAA, 2022).

EMBRACING PEER-TO-PEER SITES

Peer-to-peer file sharing provided both opportunities and obstacles for musicians. Sites like Napster and LimeWire allowed fans to share music with each other, and made discovering new music easier than it ever had been before. Fans could explore new music and discover new bands without the cost of purchasing full albums. This provided an opportunity for musicians to increase their fan base simply by having their music available on these sites. We see a surge of this in later years as streaming services allow unique playlists to be curate and platforms begin to utilize custom algorithms to suggest new music to listeners.

One group that saw a major benefit of peer-to-peer file sharing sites was alternative/indie band Radiohead. In July of 2000, their upcoming single was leaked and uploaded to Napster, three months before its official release date. The song was shared on the site so often that by the time it was officially released, it topped the Billboard charts. Their tours sold out incredibly fast, and copies of their live shows were uploaded and shared so much that fans knew all the words to their songs and sang along at shows. For a band that did not have mainstream status or the popularity of other mainstream artists, this incident clearly showed the power Napster and other peer-to-peer files sharing sites had for music promotion.

Radiohead wasn't the only band to embrace peer-to-peer file sharing sites. Rap rock band Limp Bizkit teamed up with Napster to offer a series of free concerts ahead of their new album release, with lead singer Fred Durst stating that Napster was "an amazing way to market

and promote music" to a massive audience (Staff, 2000). And not surprisingly, rock band Rage Against the Machine also embraced the file sharing platform and publicly supported Napster during their litigation with the recording industry. Napster users that had shared the band's music had their access removed from the site. Immediately following, the band's guitarist, Tom Morello, publicly denounced the action taken by the band's new management team and stated he would try to solve the issue. However, it should be noted that the band's recording label, Epic, was owned by Sony Music, who was in current litigation with Napster. Had other bands leaned into this method of file distribution, they could have seen an increase in album sales, ticket sales for live performances and tours, and merchandising sales, not to mention a stronger connection with and increased loyalty from their fans.

CONCLUSION

After losing a slew of lawsuits, Napster temporarily shut down in 2001 and filed bankruptcy in 2002, but later emerged under new ownership as an online music marketplace, similar to iTunes that allowed users to purchase mp3 files for a small fee. These technological advances that allowed peer-to-peer sites and their successors, digital music marketplaces, to thrive ultimately caused the decline of album sales — all but eliminating compact discs as a form of profit for the mainstream music industry.

Peer-to-peer file sharing sites drastically changed the way people gained access to music, but this was more a symptom to a much larger issue than the actual problem. People were tired of paying for a full album when they only wanted to purchase a single song. Media theorist Raymond Williams described this cause and effect between technology and society as *social constructivism*, in which technology is created as a response to a societal need and members of society decide which technologies are adopted (Williams, 1979). Though Williams was speaking

in reference to the television, the same can be said of P2P file sharing networks. Peer-to-Peer file sharing sites fulfilled the need of music fans to access their favorite music and obtain the song they liked without purchasing the entire album. Peer-to-peer file sharing sites provided a means for users to sample albums before paying for them and explore new genres of music that they would never have bought at full price without sampling first. This new medium had been created and widely accepted by the public; there was no way society was going back to the traditional methods of purchasing physical albums like they once had. Napster nearly destroyed the music industry, but in its wake paved the way for new media and digital technologies to change how we listen to music today.

CHAPTER 3

CASE STUDY: MUSIC STREAMING SERVICES

In the wake of the peer-to-peer file sharing debacle and the incredibly vast and public lawsuits that engulfed these sites and their users in the early 2000s, another type of new media entered the music industry: online music streaming services. Around the same time Apple was launching its digital marketplace, iTunes, allowing users to purchase songs in the form of digitally downloaded mp3 files, Rhapsody entered the industry—followed by many others, including Spotify and Pandora. Utilizing both a free access model and a paid monthly subscription model, these streaming services allow their users to listen to vast catalogs of music over the internet or download songs to their devices, allowing them to play offline. This new way of accessing music was a game changer for the music industry and consumers, allowing users to stream music and audio content across the internet rather than buying songs. Unlike streaming radio services like SiriusXM or iHeartRadio that offered radio over satellite or internet, streaming services like Spotify provide users full control of the content they consume. Music consumers no longer needed to buy each song or album or acquire their music from peer-to-peer file sharing sites like Napster or LimeWire; now they could simply listen to music over the internet. Of course, this meant that both physical and digital music sales would continue to decline. Rolling Stone reported that “In 2018, album sales fell 18.2 percent from the previous year and song sales fell 28.8 percent, according to U.S. year-end report figures from data company BuzzAngle, which tracks music consumption. Meanwhile, total on-demand music streams, including both audio and video, shot up 35.4 percent. Audio on-demand streams set a new record high in 2018 of 534.6 billion streams, which is up 42 percent from 2017’s 376.9 billion streams” (Wang, 2019).

MUSIC DEMOCRATIZATION

Many music enthusiasts and industry leaders credit streaming platforms such as Spotify, Pandora, Apple Music, and Amazon Music for saving the music industry, and in many ways they have. CNN Business reported that “After years of declines, the music industry began to rebound around 2016 thanks in large part to music streaming. Music streaming — which includes paid streaming, ad-supported streaming and streaming radio — represented about 5% of the music industry's revenues in the US in 2009. In 2019, that number had grown to roughly 80%, according to the RIAA” (Pallotta, 2020).

Streaming has further democratized the industry, making on-demand music consumption free and obtainable for everyone with a computer or mobile device and access to the internet. Streaming services offer free plans, allowing users to listen to a vast library of music free of charge, by allowing companies to advertise on their platform. Premium subscriptions allow users to listen to music or other audio content ad-free, download and play offline, and often receive exclusive content for a monthly fee averaging around ten dollars. By making music available to such a broad market, artists and labels can now reach a larger audience by utilizing streaming services. In addition, by using an online platform where music is readily available, consumers are now able to explore new genres, discover new artists, and listen from virtually anywhere.

PIRACY REDUCTION

Another feat streaming services are credited for is reducing the amount of illegal music downloads conducted by consumers. Music piracy and copyright infringement had been the bane of the recording industry for years, with record labels, recording industry organizations, and mainstream artists all launching legal campaigns against sites like Napster and LimeWire. Not only did they bombard these platforms with lawsuits, they also began pursuing the platforms’

users, suing individuals for illegally downloading copyrighted music from the sites. Streaming services managed to significantly curtail illegal downloads, though they didn't stamp it out completely. In 2018, MusicWeek reported that "The increasing take-up of streaming services - both ad-funded and premium - has seen off a good deal of piracy. YouGov found that 63% of people who have stopped illegally downloading music now use streaming services" (Paine, 2018). With the growing popularity of streaming services, consumers no longer need to download mp3 files to their computer or device, filling their hard drives with an overabundance of audio files; they can simply stream any songs they want to hear without having to first download the digital files. Music-on-demand had been the longtime dream for music consumers, and online music streaming platforms offered a legitimate means to access any song they wanted to hear from nearly anywhere.

MUSIC CATALOGS AND INDUSTRY/TECHNOLOGY CODEPENDENCY

With physical music sales dwindling and online digital music marketplaces becoming obsolete, recording labels have become increasingly dependent on streaming services for content delivery. However, they still have advantages in this new digital landscape of content distribution. Although they continued to see a significant decrease in profits from physical and digital album sales, major recording labels are still able to profit from streaming services. Recording labels have one very large advantage to maintaining some control in this new digital landscape: music catalogs. Because most often it is the recording labels, rather than the music artists themselves, that own the rights to the music they produce, over time the major recording labels have accrued vast catalogs of popular mainstream music to be played on streaming services. Record labels receive a large amount of revenue from streaming their music catalogs. Spotify launched the Loud & Clear website to provide some transparency about the music

streaming economy. On the site, Spotify reported that “As of 2020, Spotify has paid over \$23 billion in royalties to rights holders — including over \$5 billion in 2020 alone, up from \$3.3 billion in 2017.” (Spotify, 2021).

Spotify, Pandora, and other streaming services have a significant dependency on these music catalogs, as this is often what draws listeners to their platform. Music fans want to hear the music of their favorite artists, and most likely, these songs are owned by the record label with whom the artist has signed a contract. In simple terms, streaming services need the record labels for their catalog as much as the record labels need streaming services for their distribution platform.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO ENTRY FOR MUSICIANS

Possibly the biggest disruption streaming services have caused the music industry, though, is that they have leveled the playing field for smaller labels and removed the barriers to entry for independent musicians, providing an avenue for them to get their music distributed to the public. Before the emergence of streaming platforms, major record labels controlled mainstream music distribution — getting their artists’ songs played on broadcast radio and on soundtracks for television shows and movies, sales of physical copies such as cds and vinyl records, providing mp3 files for digital marketplaces such as iTunes, and other means of distribution. With streaming platforms, though, unsigned musicians no longer need the backing and support of a major record label to distribute their music to the public. Sites like Pandora and Spotify allow both signed and unsigned musicians to distribute their music on their platforms. Technological advances have made home recording software more affordable and accessible, allowing DIY artists to set up home recording studios for a fraction of what it previously cost to have a fully-equipped recording studio. This, paired with online music distribution companies

like CD Baby, allows unsigned musicians to create and distribute their music to streaming platforms affordably and autonomously, without the need to sign with a major or independent record label.

SAAS COMPANIES

Recently, one music streaming platform has been making subtle moves to decrease their dependency on major record labels. Because Spotify allows music to be added to their platform based on licensing rather than having complete dependency on major record labels to provide content, other companies have the ability to distribute their music on the platform as well. This includes software as a service (SaaS) companies that aggregate and purchase music tracks from independent artists and offer it on their subscription-based platform. Such companies as Epidemic Music and SoundStripe operate by purchasing unlicensed music directly from musicians for a one-time price and offering it royalty-free to their registered users — usually social media influencers — for use in their online video content. Because SaaS companies own the rights to the music, they also list it on streaming services like Spotify. These music tracks can often be found in the “mood” playlists on the platform, such as playlists labeled as *Focus*, *Good Vibes*, *Morning Coffee*, *Happy Beats*, *Gameday*, and many others. The increasing popularity of mood-focused playlists rather than genre-focused playlists allows these SaaS companies to receive royalties from Spotify and increase their revenue, which ultimately cuts into profits of major record labels, decreasing their leverage over streaming platforms and weakening their stronghold on the music industry.

EPISODIC CONTENT

Spotify continues to inflate their leverage over the recording industry and increase profits through their efforts to expand their episodic content on the platform. In 2020, Spotify released

their in-house podcast, “Spotify: For the Record,” and has been focusing heavily on increasing episodic content ever since. They have acquired multiple companies, including Anchor and Gimlet Media, among others, which provide content to the platform and tools for up-and-coming podcasters to create their own podcast shows. They have also signed exclusive deals with big names such as the Obamas, Dax Shephard, and Joe Rogan. There also have been many user-interface changes to their software application, allowing users to access podcasts as easily as they do music playlists. This shift from having mostly music content to including a significant amount of podcasts affords Spotify the freedom of being less dependent on record labels for music content, while also affecting revenue income that record labels and artists make from music royalties on the platform. In a blog post published on the platform Medium, Saurav Risbud provided the following example of how podcasts will interrupt streaming revenues for the record industry:

“For Spotify, podcasts are fixed costs, as they pay upfront to produce or acquire a podcast series. In the long run, this will reduce total costs, by drawing listener hours away from licensed songs. For example, if a Premium subscriber spends an hour listening to *The Bill Simmons Podcast* versus an hour streaming Queen’s *A Night at the Opera*, they will provide the same revenue to Spotify without the costs of royalty payments. If all goes well, podcasts will likely drive a small percentage of revenue but a significant percentage of profits” (Risbud, 2020).

ROYALTIES

Online streaming music services have provided many opportunities for new and unsigned musicians to achieve successful careers; however, there still remains significant room for improvement. Streaming services maintain an incredibly intricate payout model for their content contributors. Because of this complexity, it is rather difficult to decipher how much artists

actually get paid by the platforms. Producer Hive reported the 2022 royalty rates for music streaming services as follows:

MUSIC STREAMING ROYALTY RATES 2022

The latest music streaming royalty rates are as follows...

STREAMING PLATFORM	ROYALTY RATES
Amazon Music	\$0.00402 per stream
Apple Music	\$0.008 per stream
Tidal Music	\$0.01284 per stream
Deezer	\$0.0011 per stream
Pandora	\$0.00133 per stream
YouTube Music	\$0.002 per stream
Spotify	\$0.00318 per stream

Figure 1 Music Streaming Royalty Rates ((Fitzjohn & Tips, 2022).

Some sites, like Spotify, use a royalty pay range depending on multiple factors, including location, how popular the song or artist is, and whether listeners are utilizing a free or paid subscription. In addition, Spotify stated that they don't pay their artists based on royalty rates, but rather on stream share, or what proportion of the overall streams on their platform were from the artists' content.

In 2020, members of the Union of Musicians and Allied Workers banded together to speak out against Spotify's low paying practices. The organization coordinated a worldwide

campaign called “Justice at Spotify,” demanding the company pay higher royalty rates to the tune of one cent per stream and provide transparency in their business practices (UMAW, 2020). The event drew over 28,000 signatures on their petition, and people gathered at rallies in front of Spotify’s corporate offices all around the world to protest.

Spotify responded through the Loud and Clear website, attempting to address the concerns of the Union members and activists that publicly addressed the company’s less than desired business model. The website provided some data and analytics into the music industry, an overview of different types of artists that utilize the streaming service, how revenue has changed over the years, an FAQ section, and a letter from the CEO, Daniel Ek. It also displayed a video that attempted to explain how money is paid out by the platform titled, “How the Money Flows.” However, nowhere on the site did Spotify address actual pay rates or any intention to change their payout model. Instead, they chose to use strategic and effective marketing language to showcase the improvements they have made to the music industry and deflect the attention over pay from themselves to record labels, distribution companies, and other factors. Unsatisfied with Spotify’s response, the Union of Musicians and Allied Workers are continuing to push the platform to meet their demands.

CONCLUSION

Similar to the social constructivism of peer-to-peer file sharing, streaming music technology fulfilled the needs of members of society. Sites like Napster and LimeWire no longer provided a means to access music files online, as users faced legal action for using the software. Society had a new, but similar, need to access music which led to the development of cloud-based music streaming sites. Not only could music fans listen to their favorite songs, they could do so from anywhere that allowed internet access. Online streaming services were successful in

further democratizing content for listeners and changing business models to require less dependency on record labels. The relationship between streaming platforms and the recording industry remains complex. Though both of their successes are dependent on the other, the pendulum appears to be swinging in favor of streaming services.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY: SOCIAL MEDIA

At roughly the same time that the peer-to-peer file sharing platform Napster began, another type of new media was emerging: social media. Social media networks are defined as “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content” (Merriam-Webster, 2022). The idea that people could create an online user account and interact with other users, forging friendships, building online communities, and sharing information, ideas, and media content online all in one place was unheard of until this point, and has revolutionized how information and content are distributed throughout society.

Marshall McLuhan, technological determinist and media theorist, coined the term “the media is the message,” suggesting that the media itself has more impact on a society than the message it conveys, and that technology alone is the driving factor for societal change (McLuhan, 1965). Although McLuhan was referring to the changes television had on society, his theory is especially relevant to social media. The emergence of new social media platforms has exploded since its inception, and no other technology has had as great an impact on society and mass communication as social media. According to a fact sheet published online by the Pew Research Center in 2021, “When Pew Research Center began tracking social media adoption in 2005, just five percent of American adults used at least one of these platforms. By 2011 that share had risen to half of all Americans, and today 72% of the public uses some type of social media” (Pew Research, 2022). Society has adapted its behavior to conform to demands created by social media technology, which has infiltrated every aspect of our society, including the music industry.

In many ways, the impact of social media networks on the music industry have paralleled those of online music streaming services. Both new media have democratized the music industry, allowing fans free access to on-demand music content. Both media have also imposed new complications for music rights holders, pushing the boundaries of copyright laws and creating new licensing challenges for members of the recording industry. However, the impact social media has had on the music industry eclipses that of online streaming music, offering more ways than ever to connect with fans, promote new creative endeavors, and distribute work to the public. Social media has created vast opportunities for both signed and unsigned musicians, while simultaneously creating new obstacles for artists, record labels, and other major entities in the recording industry.

MYSPACE WORKS WITH THE LABELS

Though the first true social media network to gain popularity was Six Degrees, it was MySpace that captivated a mass audience. Users could create a profile page, upload photos, add music tracks to their profile, create blog posts, and connect and network with others. This was particularly beneficial to unsigned musicians, as it offered a new way to gain immense exposure while avoiding the imposing cost of traditional marketing, promotion and distribution methods.

Although MySpace's popularity was short-lived, they tried to do something no other new digital platform had attempted; they began working with major record labels to create a product that was beneficial to both the record labels and music fans. In 2005, MySpace partnered with Interscope Records to launch MySpace Records, an independent record label aimed at signing up-and-coming artists that utilized the social media platform. Interscope Records is owned by Universal Music Group, one of the four largest record labels at the time. This unique partnership between the technology company and the record label created an opportunity for MySpace

Records to explore a vast pool of emerging artists, utilize data collected by the platform detailing which artists were gaining popularity on the site, and sign new talent straight from the social media network. MySpace analyzed data and handled the Artist and Repertoire services such as talent acquisition, while Interscope Records managed the music distribution.

Later, in 2008, MySpace rolled out MySpace Music, a service where fans could access current information about their favorite bands or artists, including current events, tour schedules, and upcoming music releases. Myspace Music allowed musicians to upload music videos and embed video content from YouTube to their profile page, and featured a built-in music player, providing a free distribution method for bands to release new tunes directly to their fan base. Top bands were listed in a featured section on the site, and later were even listed in the MySpace chart list. Unsigned bands and musicians could now reach and connect directly with potential fans across the globe, as compared to only gaining fans near their geographical location, and all for free.

In addition, MySpace Music had licensing agreements with the four biggest record labels at the time, which included Sony BMG, Universal Music Group, EMI, and Warner Music Group. In an interview with Wired Magazine, MySpace CEO Chris DeWolfe said “CD sales are down 20 percent year over year, so we've created a revenue model that helps them recapture some of those lost sales. It's a first step in pointing them towards the digital future” (Mandell, 2019). By partnering with the “Big Four” record labels, MySpace Music was able to offer music streaming to its users, allowing them the functionality to create custom playlists similar to how other streaming sites operate today.

MySpace had achieved a high level of success both in gaining mass popularity among musicians and music fans, as well as forging solid working relationships with the recording

industry. However, their haste to grow rapidly without improving their products and usability, paired with the growing competition of other streamlined social media networks, soon caught up with them. As MySpace began to decline, users transitioned to other sites like Facebook and YouTube that allowed easier access to their favorite bands and provided a better user experience on the platforms. After a server migration debacle in 2019, in which they lost over twelve years' worth of user-uploaded music content, MySpace finally called it quits on the social media platform and transitioned to a music and entertainment site. Though the site has shifted away from the original format that was so popular in the early 2000s, the legacy MySpace left has had a profound impact on how musicians connect with and distribute content to their fans.

VIDEO STREAMING PLATFORMS

Video streaming services have opened a whole world of opportunities for unsigned musicians to reach new fans. Musicians that utilize video content in their promotional efforts can enforce their brand identity and allow their personality to shine through, providing a deeper connection with their fans. Music videos help tell the story of the song, allowing fans to relate to a song on a deeper level than just listening to the audio, which can strengthen loyalty to the musician or band. Musicians can utilize video content in other ways, too, like providing creative process videos, unscripted and unedited content incorporating more of the artists' personalities, or behind-the-scenes content, which all allow fans more access to the artists. Most major social media platforms allow user-generated video content to be uploaded on the site in different formats, from long-form videos like YouTube or IGTV, to live-streaming videos like Twitch and Facebook, to short-form videos like Instagram Reels and TikTok.

In 2005, YouTube emerged as the first major video streaming service, and quickly grew to a prominent streaming site that was acquired by Google less than two years later.

YouTube allows for video content of all different topics to be added to the platform, but is especially helpful to musicians as it allows a direct channel to stream both amateur and professional music videos to their fans. Many musicians have launched lucrative and successful careers from YouTube, including Justin Bieber, Lana Del Rey, and the Weeknd, who all managed to secure recording contracts after acquiring massive success on YouTube.

Unlike MySpace, which tried to work in harmony with major record labels, YouTube has caused its share of friction with the music industry. In keeping with other new media that emerged around the turn of the century, YouTube has been a hotbed for copyright infringement, and has faced multiple lawsuits from members of the recording industry. These lawsuits not only have negative implications for the tech company; they also affect content creators by limiting their ability to build on what has already been created to improve aspects of society — in this case, music. Lawrence Lessig, an academic and political activist against strict copyright laws, argues that “Overregulation stifles creativity. It smothers innovation. It gives dinosaurs a veto over the future. It wastes the extraordinary opportunity for a democratic creativity that digital technology enables” (Lessig, 2009). Loosening copyright laws to reflect something similar to Creative Commons licensing could provide more creative freedoms for artists while still protecting the intellectual property of the original artist. Unfortunately, YouTube buckled to the legal pressure imposed on them by the record labels. In 2007, the video platform released Content ID, a service that allowed major rights holders to identify instances of compromised intellectual property on the site. Digital material that is identified using Content ID is not immediately removed. Rather, YouTube offers the rights holders three different options to address the issue: 1) require the registered user to remove the infringed content from the site, 2) the rights holder can monetize the content by running advertisements throughout the content, or

3) collect viewer data and statistics from the content. Content ID works specifically for large corporations like major record labels or movie studios as a way to protect their copyrighted work by targeting smaller companies and independent artists.

Aside from YouTube, unsigned musicians also have achieved levels of success utilizing Twitch, a live-streaming platform originally adopted by the online gaming industry. Twitch, which is owned by Amazon and a direct competitor of YouTube, allows musicians to live-stream virtual performances to their fans. The length of live videos can range from a new song to a whole concert, and artists can connect a virtual tip-jar, allowing fans to give monetary support directly to the artist. For dedicated fans looking to listen to more than just a snippet of a song, Twitch provides the perfect avenue for fans to listen to, connect with, and support their favorite artists.

Twitch, like YouTube, has been a point of focus for copyright infringement attacks from the recording industry. Twitch has made attempts at skirting around licensing technicalities — only paying for performance licensing, not synchronization or mechanical licensing. Music can be used through their Soundtrack Service when live-streaming content, but is removed when the recording is archived on the site to be viewed at a later time. The Verve reported “That means Twitch is paying for licenses, just not the ones the RIAA wants” (Stephen, 2020).

Musicians have found opportunities to connect with their fan base through other video platforms, too. Social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram both allow for video content to be published on the sites, whether permanently on a newsfeed or page, or posted temporarily in the form of stories. Recently, though, it’s been TikTok that has risen to mass popularity with their short-form video clips. Musicians can utilize these short-form videos to connect with their audience, be more expressive and spontaneous than with other platforms, and

offer fans sneak peaks of what's coming down the pipeline, behind-the-scenes content, and a look at artists' creative endeavors. Unlike YouTube and Twitch, TikTok struck a deal with the three major labels to allow audio content on the site. In 2020, Billboard Magazine reported, "TikTok has struck short-term licensing deals with Universal Music Group, Sony Music and Warner Music Group, multiple sources tell Billboard, as the rapidly growing video-making app continues to establish itself in the music industry. This means there won't be any disruptions from the major labels pulling content in the near future, which is crucial for its growth at a time when more people are looking for ways to pass the time while the coronavirus pandemic has much of the world staying home, and that the deals give TikTok the rights to use 30-second clips of any of the record labels' songs." (Stutz, 2020).

Video streaming sites offer many options for unsigned musicians to grow their audiences, from posting music videos, live-streaming songs or full concert performances as seen during the pandemic, to using reels and TikTok videos to connect with and expand their fan base. Being able to connect through commenting on posts or direct messaging allows musicians the ability to bypass the need for a record label or public relations team and provides a new level of artist accessibility that was not previously available to them.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR UNSIGNED MUSICIANS

Industry and topic specific social networks exist alongside general social media platforms, focusing content and networking on niche audiences. Sites such as LinkedIn, Behance, and Dribbble cater to specific markets, such as business networking and creative professionals. The music industry is no different, with sites like SoundCloud and ReverbNation offering social and networking services to independent and DIY artists. Both of these sites were created specifically with musicians in mind, as a way for musicians to promote their work,

distribute their music, network with other musicians and industry professionals, and monetize their music. Although these sites are similar to streaming services, their primary focus is independent musicians and offering them tools to grow their careers. SoundCloud provides a place for musicians to upload and distribute their music, as well as several services that can be utilized to monetize their work. ReverbNation offers a slew of resources to support independent artists, helping them distribute their music online, create websites and electronic press kits, find gigs, and promote their art to reach more fans. Social networking sites like these, paired with advancing technology and affordability of digital audio workstations and video editing software, provide almost all the tools necessary for DIY or independent musicians to launch and grow their musical careers without the need to sign to record labels.

CONCLUSION

Social media technology continues to shape our society — transforming the way we communicate with others, obtain information, and access entertainment media. Even though social media has been broadly accepted as a useful tool in society, technology continues to be a driving force for determining mass behavior, especially in regards to the music industry. This is evident in the way artists connect with their fans and create new forms of media for distribution, such as music videos. It can also be seen in how artists publish distinct types of content at specific times in an effort to appease the algorithms used by these social media platforms.

Similar to audio streaming platforms, social media and video streaming services like YouTube, Twitch, and ReverbNation have removed significant barriers to entry for independent musicians. Not only can artists now distribute their music to much larger audiences without signing with major record labels, they also gain the ability to connect and communicate directly with their fans. Musicians don't need a contract with a record label or distribution company to

access these platforms; anyone can create an account and start uploading content.

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDY: CARR & TEJADA

New media technologies have caused considerable interruptions to the music industry since the inception of the digital era, giving rise to extensive transformations in music distribution, promotion, and revenue streams for artists and labels. The barriers that have been removed for unsigned musicians are vast, and new media have created immense opportunities for independent artists seeking to thrive in the industry. These shifts have caused a decentralization of the music industry, and provided artists access to all the tools necessary to build and execute their own promotion and distribution plans.

Independent musicians Carr & Tejada have experienced this dichotomy of a centralized versus decentralized music industry firsthand. For years, they have performed both original songs and covers at local venues — experiencing the effects the music industry imposes on their career through complicated licensing practices for both them and the venue owners. They have also recognized the power technology and new media have in creating opportunities to reach a new audience independent of help from record labels or industry professionals.

THE BAND

Carr & Tejada is an acoustic guitar duo from southern Illinois performing music that draws inspiration from folk, old country, and American roots music. The duo have been performing original music and cover songs at establishments across the region for over three years. Both members have been surrounded by music from a young age. Bill Carr is a third-generation musician and self-taught rhythm guitarist. Dan Tejada was taught blues and slack-key guitar from his father throughout his youth, and has played with a variety of regional acts for over a decade. Carr & Tejada have an authentic stage presence, performing music that tells

stories and covers themes that captivates their listeners, accompanied by guitar licks that engage the audience. The singer/songwriter duo often refer to their style as *Shawnee Americana* — a salute to the Midwest region they call home.

The duo have seen moderate success in booking live performances throughout the region, and are looking to expand their presence into the digital landscape to share their music with a larger audience online. Carr & Tejada can utilize an omni-channel online marketing, promotion, and content distribution strategy to cultivate a captive and engaged audience without the need to sign with a major or independent record label. This will allow them freedom and autonomy over their music promotion, online presence, content delivery methods, monetization efforts, and provide them a direct line to communicate with their fans.

CONDUCTING BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Conducting some basic research is the first step to creating an effective marketing and distribution strategy. Carr & Tejada should spend some time observing the current music industry and regional music scene to define their strategic goals and objectives. By conducting a S.W.O.T. (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of similar local musicians, identifying their target audience, and researching various platforms, Carr & Tejada can make informed and effective decisions about their marketing, promotional, and distribution goals and strategies.

ESTABLISH CAMPAIGN GOALS

After conducting preliminary research, Carr & Tejada can start to define their goals for their marketing strategy. Depending on the musician, their audience, and stage of their career, these goals can vary tremendously. An independent artist starting out in their career may set a campaign goal to create an established presence online by reaching new fans and generating

engagement with their audience. More established indie musicians may choose to create marketing campaigns to increase fan engagement and merchandise sales. Established artists preparing for a new album or single release may choose to focus their marketing goals on generating excitement around the new music launch and increasing airtime on streaming platforms. Setting clear, executable goals is the first step in constructing an effective, successful marketing campaign.

Carr & Tejada are in the early stages of their music career. Throughout the past three years, they have managed to book gigs at many local venues and establishments, and their goal now is to grow into a more regional act and reach a broader audience online. This will include establishing an effective digital presence to develop a loyal and engaged audience online, while simultaneously reaching new venues to book shows within and outside of their local area.

ESTABLISHING A BRAND AND VISUAL IDENTITY

Establishing a brand is essential in telling Carr & Tejada's story and connecting with their audience. It allows the band to establish the who, what, and why of their craft. It tells their fans who they are, what type of music they play, why they create music and what they value as a band. This can be accomplished by producing an effective biography, a strong logo and supplementary visual elements that support the brand's style, and by defining their voice for online posting. The brand must be authentic to the band, and remain consistent throughout all aspects of their digital presence. Effective branding is key to a successful marketing and promotion strategy, as it informs all other components of the plan, from choice of distribution and social media platforms, to photos and other visual elements used on online platforms, to the tone of their social media posts, to the style of merchandise they produce. The most obvious depiction of their brand will be through the creation of an electronic press kit that will be posted

on their website and can be distributed to venues for booking and promotion.

OMNI-CHANNEL STRATEGY

The digital landscape today is filled with online platforms and marketing channels that can help musicians reach their audience. Utilizing a mix of these channels will provide Carr & Tejada a greater chance of reaching their overarching goal of developing a loyal fan base. First, they must identify their listeners and choose effective marketing channels to best engage and increase their fans. The duo's marketing strategy will incorporate the use of online music streaming services, social media and video streaming services, a website, merchandising, and other means to monetize their work. Considering the risks some online platforms post to user data and privacy, using an omni-channel distribution and promotion strategy allows fans the option to choose how they listen to the music and interact with the band online. By including a combination of online distribution and promotional platforms, Carr & Tejada can expand their reach to prospective fans, hone in on their niche audience, and increase fan loyalty by offering new avenues to connect directly with the artists.

WEBSITE STRATEGY

By creating their own website, carrandtejada.com, the artists are able to create a completely branded and customized presence on the internet. The website will provide a landing place for the band, a place to cultivate a devoted audience and where all other marketing channels will direct users. The site will provide the primary source of information about the band, offering new updates, releases, live performance dates, and more. Depending on the amount of content, the site may be set up as a one-page site or may include multiple pages. The sections to be included are as follows:

- **Home Page / Landing Page** - This will be the main landing page for the band and will

establish the brand. This will also include a music player with a few select songs and video content if available.

- **Biography** - This section will include the individual musical backgrounds of the duo, how and when they began playing music together, what they accomplished as a band, and what they plan to do in the future.
- **Upcoming Schedule** - This will feature the schedule of upcoming live and virtual performances, including the option to purchase tickets.
- **Electronic Press Kit** - The EPK will be available for venues wanting to promote upcoming shows, and will include biographical information, photos, sample audio and video, as well as information to book the band for a show.
- **E-Commerce Platform** - The e-commerce section of the site will offer online merchandise and album sales. A print-on-demand method will be implemented to keep overhead costs low on merchandise.
- **Connect** - This section will include a contact form for live performance inquiries and social media links that encourage discovery and engagement on other platforms.
- **Calls to Action** - The website will include a few calls to action, including fields for fans to sign up for a mailing list and Patreon, support the band through a virtual tip jar, and a place for venues to inquire about booking information.

MUSIC DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

Music distribution is a core component of any marketing strategy for musicians. The most effective way to achieve this is to work with a music distribution company. There are many music distribution companies available that offer a range of services, including music distribution, licensing, analytics, monetization services, promotional services, and much more.

Carr & Tejada should work with one of these companies, such as CD Baby, to obtain the proper licensing and get their music listed on streaming services. The price is minimal considering all the services offered, and the band is not required to enter into a contract with the company, but rather can purchase from an a la carte menu of services, such as single or album distribution and publishing. With CD Baby, Carr & Tejada can have their music streamed on all the major streaming services, including Spotify, Amazon Music, Apple Music, Tidal, YouTube, Pandora, and many others. In doing so, it also allows the band to collect royalties from these streaming services, albeit minimal.

Several music distribution companies also offer the option to have physical music copies produced, such as records and CDs. Purchasing physical copies to have for sale at live performances and on their website is an essential part of their music distribution plan. Producing CDs or records to sell offers the customer something tangible to purchase from the band — something enjoyed at home, shared with others, or added to any music enthusiast's collection.

In addition to using a music distribution company, Carr & Tejada should also list their work on social and distribution sites specifically for musicians, including SoundCloud, BandCamp, and ReverbNation. These online platforms offer a means to post their songs publicly for music lovers eager to discover new music. The duo can utilize SoundCloud to create a profile page on the site, publish content on the platform, communicate directly with fans, and share their music to other social media platforms. Once a certain amount of streams is reached on the site, SoundCloud offers the option to start monetizing their page. Unlike SoundCloud, though, uploading their music to BandCamp would allow the duo to start monetizing their work immediately. BandCamp makes significant efforts to help their musicians get compensated fairly

and transparently for their work by only taking a small percentage of transactions so that artists make a higher profit from their sales. Creating a presence on BandCamp would offer both an avenue for the duo to connect with fans and to get paid for their music. Lastly, Carr & Tejada should list their work on ReverbNation. Similar to SoundCloud and BandCamp, ReverbNation offers a chance to connect directly with fans, as well as a slew of other services specifically curated for musicians. Carr & Tejada could use these services to their advantage, including digital distribution, promotional tools, booking new gigs, creating a press kit, and much more.

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

Engaging with fans on social media networks is an integral part of Carr & Tejada's social media strategy. The duo should choose the best social media platforms to connect with their current audience and grow their fan base, including SoundCloud, BandCamp, and ReverbNation. Based on current trends in the digital world, they should also consider creating presences on the following platforms:

- **YouTube** - Carr & Tejada can utilize the video streaming platform to upload music videos, communicate directly with fans, and monetize their work.
- **TikTok** - A presence on TikTok provides an opportunity for Carr & Tejada to post behind-the-scenes content, short videos about their creative process, and funny and engaging videos for fans. They may also consider incorporating their own custom augmented reality filters for fans to use in their own videos.
- **Instagram** - Like TikTok, Carr & Tejada can post short videos to the reels section of their page. They can also use the Instagram Stories service to post time-sensitive videos, such as upcoming performance schedules and merchandise sales, and post photos and videos to their page. This gives them the opportunity to increase their band's visual

identity and brand, while connecting directly to fans.

- **Facebook** - Though it's not as popular as it once was, Facebook can be an effective platform for the band to use, offering the chance to create events and connect with a more mature audience. If they choose, they can also use the services offered by Facebook for Business, including paid advertising campaigns and analytics.

MONETIZATION STRATEGY

Monetizing their work is essential to continuing their musical career, allowing them to keep recording and releasing new music. This may be the most challenging objective for a musician to accomplish, but it's not impossible. There are several ways bands can earn money from their creative work. These include:

- **Monetizing Their YouTube Channel** - Not only will they be able to connect with their fans, but they can also earn money from their YouTube content. The key to doing this successfully is to remain authentic on the platform, and not tailor their content away from the music in order to sell or promote a product — otherwise, they run the risk of losing fans.
- **Virtual Tip Jar** - Including a virtual tip jar online as well as at live events, through a Venmo or PayPal account, allows fans to support them directly.
- **Pricing for Live Performances**- Pricing, whether that consists of charging the venue or selling tickets to a show, is quite possibly the most important means of monetization for a band or musician, and is the largest revenue stream for Carr & Tejada.
- **Patreon** - Once an online presence is established and they begin growing their fanbase, Carr & Tejada should consider creating a Patreon, or monthly membership, allowing loyal fans access to exclusive content for a small or moderate monthly price. Pricing tiers

can be set to allow access to those that can afford a little or a lot for exclusive content.

- **E-Commerce Store** - As mentioned in the website strategy, Carr & Tejada can profit from having an online storefront attached to their website that offers music and merchandise sales.
- **Merchandise Sales** - Custom band merchandise such as apparel, hats, totes, patches, stickers, and more is an easy way to increase revenue. Carr & Tejada can have custom merchandise available at all their live shows and in any local shops willing to carry their items. Merchandise should also be available for purchase through the online store on the band's website. These items would be available through a print-on-demand model, using a third party company to print and ship items only after they've been purchased by a customer — keeping upfront costs and overhead low for the band.
- **Sync Licensing** - Obtaining sync licensing offers Carr & Tejada the opportunity to have their music synched for use in visual media, such as films and television shows, commercials, YouTube videos, and much more.

It's worth mentioning that musicians make royalties from streaming platforms, however, the percentages are so low that musicians should focus on other avenues of revenue and use streaming as a means of promotion and distribution rather than monetization.

CONCLUSION

New media technology has created gateways for new musicians to create strong digital presences online independent of record labels. The strategy above lays out several options available to Carr & Tejada to promote their work online and distribute their music to a new digital audience. While there are boundless tools available to them, taking on the additional responsibilities of digital distribution and online promotion can be a vast and time-consuming

endeavor. It may be in their best interest to hire a marketing strategist to create an online promotion and distribution strategy for them, freeing up their time to write and create new music, perform at live venues, and connect with fans once their online strategy has been implemented. Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 below provide a preview of a proposal for an integrated marketing and distribution strategy created for Carr & Tejada that lays out the background, goals, competition, current and prospective audiences, project specifications, and final deliverables.

THE BAND

Carr & Tejada is an acoustic guitar duo from Southern Illinois performing music that draws inspiration from folk, old country, and American roots music. The duo have been performing both original songs and covers at venues and establishments across the region for over three years.

Both members have a longstanding love for music, as both grew up in families full of musicians. Bill is a third-generation musician and self-taught rhythm guitarist. Dan was taught blues and slack-key guitar from his father at a young age, and has played with a variety of regional acts for over a decade.

Carr & Tejada have an authentic stage presence. No frills, no fluff, just good tunes that their audience can connect to. Their original music features lyrics that tell a story and cover themes that captivate their listeners, accompanied by guitar licks that will have everyone in the audience tapping along.

The singer/songwriter duo often refer to their style as “Shawnee Americana”, a salute to the Midwest region they call home.



Figure 2 Strategy Proposal: The Band

PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project will include the creation of an integrated marketing, promotional, and distribution strategy for the acoustic music duo, Carr & Tejada. This strategy will include the creation of branding and visual guidelines.

This strategy will include ways the musicians can easily incorporate new media and digital technologies to reach their marketing, promotional, and distribution goals and objectives.

This includes the creation of a new website, creation of new social media accounts and a strategy necessary to effectively maintain those accounts. The project will also include strategies for music distribution, including online music streaming and music sales.

It will culminate with strategies the band can implement to monetize their work in order to continue creating music. The strategies will need to be effective, while also being easily implemented and maintained by the band.

PROJECT GOALS

GOAL 1

Create strategic plan that helps the band reach new fans through an increased and engaging digital presence.

GOAL 2

Produce digital presence and strategy that increases live performances bookings with venues within and outside of the local region.

OBJECTIVE 1

Establish the band's a digital presence online through the creation branding and visual guide, a website, and social media accounts.

OBJECTIVE 2

Create and populate music distribution streams on music streaming sites and other online avenues.

OBJECTIVE 3

Create revenue streams through the monetization of a youtube channel, merchandise shop, patreon and other means.

Figure 3 Strategy Proposal: Project Overview and Goals

FINAL DELIVERABLES

WEBSITE

The website will contain the following sections:

- Homepage
- Biography
- Upcoming Schedule
- Electronic Press Kit
- E-Commerce Platform
- Connect/Contact
- Calls to Action

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

The social media strategy will include instructions for implementation, posting, engagement, and management of the following platforms:

- YouTube
- TikTok
- Instagram
- Facebook

MUSIC DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

The music distribution strategy will consist of the following:

- Registration with CD Baby - includes licensing and distribuion on platforms like Spotify, Amazon Music, Apple Music, and Tidal.
- Account creation and strategy for Soundcloud, BandCamp, and ReverbNation.

MONETIZATION STRATEGY

Additional monitization channels include:

- YouTube
- Virtual Tip Jar
- Patreon
- E-Commerce Store
- Merchandise Sales
- Sync Licensing



Figure 4 Strategy Proposal: Final Deliverables

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Marshall McLuhan's emphasis on the medium having more impact on society than the message its conveying can be applied to the way new digital media have impacted the music industry. Peer-to-peer file sharing sites turned the music industry on its head with the launch of sites like Napster and LimeWire, decentralizing music distribution and making music freely available for music consumers. Online music streaming services further democratized the way we access music and continued to ravage the industry's revenues from cd sales. It also provided a platform for all musicians, signed and unsigned, to distribute their music — further decentralizing control within the music industry. Social media provided a vast expansion of McLuhan's concept of a global village, allowing musicians to connect with fans all over the world. This, paired with video streaming sites, offered an opportunity for musicians to take full control of their brands and engage directly with fans without the need of marketing and publicity teams.

The interferences caused by new media have broken barriers for unsigned musicians to enter the music industry and provided a means for independent artists to have fruitful careers. Artists can purchase affordable software to create music at home or in their own studios. They can use music distribution companies as catalysts to disburse music to the public. They can use social media platforms as marketing and communication tools for engaging directly with fans.

This, however, has caused other limitations for independent musicians. The gatekeepers of the music industry no longer have control of these traditional streams, and new digital platforms are getting flooded with content from unsigned musicians. Now that anyone can create and distribute music, the market is becoming oversaturated with a large number of amateur

musicians, diluting streaming services with mediocre music and making it difficult for talented artists to get noticed in a sea of other entertainers. Artists also have to adopt entrepreneurial approaches to their work, adding on the responsibilities of managing all other aspects of their businesses, such as music distribution and promotion. The increased responsibilities this creates for a band or musician can be daunting, especially if they have no previous experience or knowledge of managing these duties.

Major record labels have always maintained an aggressive approach to piracy and copyright infringement, and it's doubtful that they will loosen their restrictions on it anytime soon. The underlying issue of copyright infringement permeated each new media that has risen in popularity over the last three decades. The depth in which the laws are written and how far the RIAA is willing to push legal action to protect copyright in an attempt to maintain control over profits stifles artists' creativity and impedes fans from freely accessing music online. The ability of new media and large tech companies to have this big an impact on the music industry is incredibly significant and will continue to have a strong hand in shaping the future of the music industry.

However, the current development and release of a portable remix device could begin to change things. Artist and rapper Kanye West recently released his newest album *exclusively* on the Stem Player, which allows users to customize any song downloaded onto the device. The Stem Player offers full control of the bass, drums, vocals, and other stems of the song, while also allowing users to add effects and loops. It's too soon to see how this could impact copyright infringement laws. It is possible we could see an uptick in Creative Commons (CC) licensing for music, creating a hybrid economy similar to that supported by Lawrence Lessig. According to Lessig, "Copyright law has got to give up its obsession with 'the copy.' The law should not

regulate 'copies' or 'modern reproductions' on their own. It should instead regulate uses--like public distributions of copies of copyrighted work--that connect directly to the economic incentive copyright law was intended to foster.” (Lessig, 2009). If mainstream artists are willing to allow fans to remix their work and create new tracks from their work, it could have a profound impact on copyright laws, intellectual property, and piracy.

All of these new media have provided substantial means to disrupt the music economy at large, reducing the tight grip once held by an elite corporate few and introducing new resources for a more independent framework—a system by which musicians create and manage their own fruitful careers, free from autocratic recording contracts that historically exploited individual artists and their intellectual property. Technology and the rise of new digital platforms will persist, profoundly impacting mainstream music. Consumers will continue to see the struggle play out between a centrally-controlled music industry ruled by oppressive record labels versus the ongoing social movements aiming to decentralize and destabilize that business model. This changing paradigm will ultimately create new opportunities and new threats to independent musicians, though for now, the pendulum appears to be swinging steadily in their favor.

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APPENDIX

Integrated Marketing and Distribution Strategy Proposal



THE BAND

Carr & Tejada is an acoustic guitar duo from Southern Illinois performing music that draws inspiration from folk, old country, and American roots music. The duo have been performing both original songs and covers at venues and establishments across the region for over three years.

Both members have a longstanding love for music, as both grew up in families full of musicians. Bill is a third-generation musician and self-taught rhythm guitarist. Dan was taught blues and slack-key guitar from his father at a young age, and has played with a variety of regional acts for over a decade.

Carr & Tejada have an authentic stage presence. No frills, no fluff, just good tunes that their audience can connect to. Their original music features lyrics that tell a story and cover themes that captivate their listeners, accompanied by guitar licks that will have everyone in the audience tapping along.

The singer/songwriter duo often refer to their style as “Shawnee Americana”, a salute to the Midwest region they call home.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project will include the creation of an integrated marketing, promotional, and distribution strategy for the acoustic music duo, Carr & Tejada. This strategy will include the creation of branding and visual guidelines.

This strategy will include ways the musicians can easily incorporate new media and digital technologies to reach their marketing, promotional, and distribution goals and objectives.

This includes the creation of a new website, creation of new social media accounts and a strategy necessary to effectively maintain those accounts. The project will also include strategies for music distribution, including online music streaming and music sales.

It will culminate with strategies the band can implement to monetize their work in order to continue creating music. The strategies will need to be effective, while also being easily implemented and maintained by the band.

PROJECT GOALS

GOAL 1

Create strategic plan that helps the band reach new fans through an increased and engaging digital presence.

GOAL 2

Produce digital presence and strategy that increases live performances bookings with venues within and outside of the local region.

OBJECTIVE 1

Establish the band's a digital presence online through the creation branding and visual guide, a website, and social media accounts.

OBJECTIVE 2

Create and populate music distribution streams on music streaming sites and other online avenues.

OBJECTIVE 3

Create revenue streams through the monetization of a YouTube channel, merchandise shop, patreon and other means.

LOCAL MUSIC SCENE

Southern Illinois has always had a vibrant music scene. Although Carbondale used to be the hub of live music in Southern Illinois, however, many venues throughout the surrounding area have begun hosting live music on Friday and Saturday nights, Sunday afternoons, and weeknight happy hours. You can find live music at breweries, wineries, restaurants, block parties, fundraisers, and a slew of other events.

There are several musicians, duos, trios, and bands that play locally at these events, all bringing a unique style and sound to their listeners. Below is a list of some of the local acts that play a similar style and genre and play at some of the same venues as Carr & Tejada. **This is *not* an exhaustive list.**

Ethan Stephenson
Singer/Songwriter

Honey & Tar
Acoustic Duo

Tim Crosby
Singer/Songwriter

T-Lex
Acoustic Duo

Johnny Coller
Singer/Songwriter

Bill Harper
Singer/Songwriter

The Cattails
Acoustic Trio

Marshall Anderson
Singer/Songwriter

Brent Stewart
Singer/Songwriter

Pity Thy Neighbor
Acoustic Duo

Corey Evitts
One Man Band

Jeff Bradley
Acoustic Musician

AUDIENCE

CURRENT AUDIENCE

Carr & Tejada's current audience consists of blue collar folks that work hard and want to socialize and relax with friends and good music. Their current audience is middle-aged, mostly caucasian individuals with light to moderate technology skills. Social media usage is primarily on Facebook with a small audience on Instagram. They tend to enjoy listening to live music at a local venue, such as a brewery or winery. Most access music on streaming services, but some still prefer to download digital copies to their devices or purchase physical cds.

PROSPECTIVE AUDIENCE

Their prospective audience will be accessed mostly online, but still enjoy live music with friends. The age range for this target audience is late 20's to mid/late 30's, varied ethnicity with high technology skills. Mostly made up of younger, busy professionals, this group prefers to access their music digitally. Most use streaming services such as Spotify or Amazon Music, but will search out new music on Band Camp or SoundCloud.





CURRENT FAN PERSONA

STEVEN WILSON

College Professor

DEMOGRAPHICS

MALE | 57 YEARS OLD | COBDEN, IL | MARRIED

BIO

Steven is a college professor who lives with his wife on the outskirts of Cobden, IL. His wife, Cathy, is a speech pathologist. He has two adult children, Ashley, a 22 year old public health major in college, and 25 year old Justin, a newly employed high school history teacher.

Steven is the advisor for a student organization on campus. Steven and Cathy enjoy listening to live music on the weekends at the local winery close to their home.

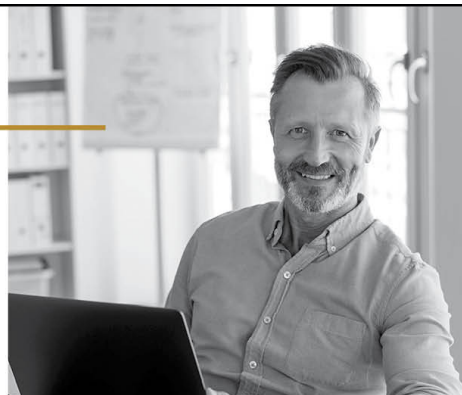
TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA



Older Smartphone
Older PC Desktop Computer



Local news
Academic journals
Facebook



GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

Steven has a passion for teaching and wants to continue his work for the foreseeable future. Now that his children have moved out, he wants to start spending more time out with friends in experiencing southern Illinois.

CHALLENGES

Although he enjoys the freedom that comes with his children growing up, he sometimes struggles with empty nest syndrome. Pandemic lock down has left him craving social interactions with friends.



PROSPECTIVE FAN PERSONA

BRITTANY KELLER

UX Designer

DEMOGRAPHICS

FEMALE | 34 YEARS OLD | ST. LOUIS, MO | SINGLE MOTHER

BIO

Brittany is a single mother from St. Louis, MO working remotely as a UX designer for a large corporation. She has a 7 year old son, Eli, who she shares custody of with his father. Her days are busy, managing a busy career during the day and shuffling Eli to his soccer games in the evenings. Days when Eli is with his father, she maintains a steady social life with friends. She volunteers for the local brewery association, donating her time to support the annual brew festival and other home brew competitions. She is a heavy social media user, having an active account on all the major social media platforms.

TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA



Newest version smartphone
New mac computer



Reliable Online News Sources
Social media



GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

Brittany's goals are to maintain a balanced life between work, family, and friends. She values flexibility in her schedule and strives to give Eli new experiences like experiencing live music. She's digitally savvy and enjoys the convenience of having music accessible right on her phone.

CHALLENGES

Co-parenting is a challenge, and being a single mother is exhausting without support, leaving her tired after a full day of work and parenting. Keeping up with social engagements can be a challenge.

SPECIFICATIONS

Project Requirements

- Branding and visual design guide that can be adapted across all digital platforms.
- Website must be easy to update and maintain.
- Social media plan must include strategy for posting content.

Timeline

- Strategic plan will be implemented in stages for the duration of 6 months. After all deliverables have been produced and progress has been assessed, the team and client can reevaluate the project and make a strategy for moving forward.
- Month 1 - branding and visual guide
- Month 3 - Website and social media accounts created and distribution strategy implemented.
- Month 6 - monetization strategy implemented, online presence established, feedback provided to client.

Budget

Budget for this project will be \$5,000.



FINAL DELIVERABLES

WEBSITE

The website will contain the following sections:

- Homepage
- Biography
- Upcoming Schedule
- Electronic Press Kit
- E-Commerce Platform
- Connect/Contact
- Calls to Action

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

The social media strategy will include instructions for implementation, posting, engagement, and management of the following platforms:

- YouTube
- TikTok
- Instagram
- Facebook

MUSIC DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY

The music distribution strategy will consist of the following:

- Registration with CD Baby - includes licensing and distribution on platforms like Spotify, Amazon Music, Apple Music, and Tidal.
- Account creation and strategy for Soundcloud, BandCamp, and ReverbNation.

MONETIZATION STRATEGY

Additional monetization channels include:

- YouTube
- Virtual Tip Jar
- Patreon
- E-Commerce Store
- Merchandise Sales
- Sync Licensing



VITA

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Research Paper Title:

Decentralizing the Music Industry: New Media Create Gateways for Independent Musicians

Major Professor: Robert Spahr