

# INTRODUCTION

When we talk about ‘the music industry’ or ‘the music business’ in day-to-day life, it is assumed that we all agree about what it is we are talking about. Likewise, when newspaper columnists discuss ‘the death of the music industry’ or use phrases like ‘the music industry believes that ...’ there is an underlying presupposition that the music industry is a single, unproblematic, corporate entity that shares values, strategies and methods. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

The music industries exist in a multitude of forms: a network of businesses that vary from the very small to the very large, and represent a wide range of commercial activities. They produce goods and services of many different kinds, from a monthly night of DJs playing a local venue to a music royalties collection agency with 800 employees, or from a large merchandise company making band posters and t-shirts to a single individual providing musical score transcription services for composers and orchestras (to describe just a few). Many music businesses do not appear to be especially business-like in their style, and some may even have the appearance of a group of friends working together on a hobby project that they love. Indeed, they may be just that. Collectively, the economic weight of the smaller businesses may not match that of the major recording and publishing companies, but their activities are still significant and are worthy of our attention.

## QUESTIONING ‘TRADITIONAL’ MODELS OF THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

The ‘traditional’ music industry model for aspirant artists/performers starts with writing or choosing songs, playing live to build a following, seeking publishing and recording deals, and then recording in a professional studio with the resultant record manufactured and promoted through magazines, radio and television to drive retail sales. Every aspect of this flow model has been disrupted by the digitalization of the music industries since the 1980s. Digital recording, distribution, marketing and sales have become commonplace as have financially affordable tools for achieving a professional product.

This does not mean the traditional model is in danger of being entirely replaced or that the major record labels and publishers will necessarily lose their predominant position. But it does mean that the model is being actively reconfigured at all scales of the music industries, and those interested in studying and working in those industries must keep abreast of the changes and possibilities that are emerging. This book supports this by examining several

sectors of the music industries in light of technological developments and in relation to both major and independent artists and companies. These chapters discuss the sectors in separation from each other in order to impose some clarity and order. However, in reality, there are numerous linkages in what is a highly interdependent set of business responsibilities, roles and activities. Readers are encouraged to make creative connections between the chapters in order to further understand how the different areas impact each other.

## STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book addresses the rich variety and scale of the music industries by examining the most important aspects of those industries, and considering the effects of technological, social, cultural and economic change upon them. To help frame those considerations, the first chapter outlines some of the key research approaches used by scholars for understanding the historical development of the music industries and the contemporary issues that face them. Chapter 2 moves on to discuss the structure and strategies of the recorded music industries at every level – from major transnational media conglomerates to the micro-independent bedroom labels and independent artists. Critical to this chapter are the effects of technological developments and the need for record companies of all sizes to deal with the changing and uncertain tastes of the public.

Chapter 3 focuses on songwriting and publishing, and helps readers to understand the creative and the industrial contexts and issues involved in writing and making money from songs. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 explore, in turn, the workings of record production (specifically record production), music distribution, and music promotion. These are crucial areas of the recorded music industries and ones that have been subject to considerable innovation in recent decades as digital technologies have developed and transformed their operations. Chapter 7 turns attention to the live music industry. This sector has seen sizeable growth in the 2000s and now outperforms the recorded music business in the UK in terms of income generated. The emerging inter-relationships between the live and recorded music sectors are unpicked, as are changes in primary and secondary ticketing. Chapter 8 then considers consumption practices based around music and how music is made meaningful by audiences.

The final two chapters of the book examine legal aspects of the music industries. Chapter 9 explains and reviews copyright law in the UK and the US and the historical and philosophical framework that underpins it. The chapter also assesses the differing responses and tactics of the music industries and artists to the issue of music piracy. Chapter 10 discusses some of the contractual agreements and relationships through which the music industry operates, with an emphasis on artist management, music publishing and music recording.

Taken together, the chapters of this book offer a framework for developing a deeper understanding of the many aspects of the music industries and their inter-relationships with each other. It helps to make sense of them in historical, cultural, technological and economic terms, and to provide a critical focus

on the processes that lead to change. By adopting a research-centred and analytical approach, readers can keep track of the ongoing development of the music industries and place themselves in the front line of innovation and entrepreneurship in the future.

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