



NORDIC MUSIC CREATORS: ARTIST DEVELOPMENT AND MUSIC DISTRIBUTION

Bob Burke, 2025

Interreg



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Introduction: Nordic Music Creators

<https://www.interregaurora.eu/approved-projects/nordic-music-creators/>

The Interreg Aurora-funded project **Nordic Music Creators** is a collaborative initiative designed to strengthen the music industry in the Aurora region. Its primary goal is to establish a sustainable and dynamic environment for music creators, entrepreneurs, and educational institutions. By offering mentorship programs, educational initiatives, webinars, conferences, and cross-border networking opportunities, the project aims to empower individuals and organizations in the music sector. Through fostering innovation, knowledge sharing, and environmental sustainability, Nordic Music Creators seeks to position the Interreg Aurora programme area as a thriving hub for music and entrepreneurship, with a strong emphasis on ecological, economic, and social sustainability. ***For more details, visit: Interreg Aurora - Nordic Music Creators***

About Nordic Music Creators (NMC)

<https://nordicmusiccreators.com>

Launched in early 2024, Nordic Music Creators (NMC) is a dynamic network fostering innovation and collaboration in the Aurora region's music industry. NMC brings together a diverse community of music creators, entrepreneurs, and educational institutions to build a supportive and thriving ecosystem. The initiative facilitates networking, professional growth, and new creative opportunities, ensuring that music creators can connect, develop, and excel together.

Interreg Aurora

<https://www.interregaurora.eu/about-us/>

Interreg Aurora is a European Union Interreg programme focused on cross-border cooperation from 2021 to 2027. It offers unique opportunities for collaboration across the northernmost parts of Europe and Sápmi. A key feature of the programme is its integration with Sápmi and the indigenous Sámi people.

Regions Covered

The project spans across Finland, Sweden, and Norway:

Finland: Lappi, Pohjois-Pohjanmaa, Keski-Pohjanmaa, Österbotten (Pohjanmaa), Etelä-Pohjanmaa, Kainuu, and Pohjois-Karjala.

Sweden: Norrbotten, Västerbotten, Västernorrland, Jämtland, and Idre Sameby (Dalarna).

Norway: Finnmark, Troms, Nordland, Trøndelag, and Innlandet (Elgå Reinbeitedistrikt).



Artist Development

Investment from Major Labels

The partnership between record companies and artists remains a cornerstone of the global music industry, driving both creative and commercial success. Record labels invest \$7.1bn annually in A&R and marketing, providing artists with the resources needed to develop their careers and connect with audiences worldwide. Innovation is central to the modern record company, reshaping artist-label collaborations, embracing new technologies, and expanding opportunities for musicians outside traditional pathways. This approach fosters diverse projects and enhances fan experiences, ensuring that music continues to evolve in exciting ways.

Despite the industry's growth, significant challenges persist, including digital piracy and streaming fraud. The rise of generative AI has introduced a new concern, as some developers use music without authorization to create competing products. These issues threaten the sustainability of the music ecosystem, requiring record companies to have effective tools and regulatory support. Addressing these challenges is essential to maintaining a fair and thriving industry where artists are compensated for their work and can continue to create music that resonates globally.

In an increasingly competitive music landscape, the role of record labels in supporting artists is more vital than ever. While artists today have numerous ways to create and distribute music independently, partnering with a record company remains a strategic choice. Labels provide access to expert teams, global networks, and promotional support, helping artists break through and build lasting careers. As the primary investors in music, record companies continue to empower talent, ensuring that great music reaches audiences in the most impactful ways.



Artists today are multi-talented creative expressionists. They want to share their story and create their universe on so many different platforms. This could be through their live shows, their visual identity, movies, and other forms of storytelling. As an industry, we have responded to this. Today we are working alongside artists on so many more and different endeavours than we have done historically.

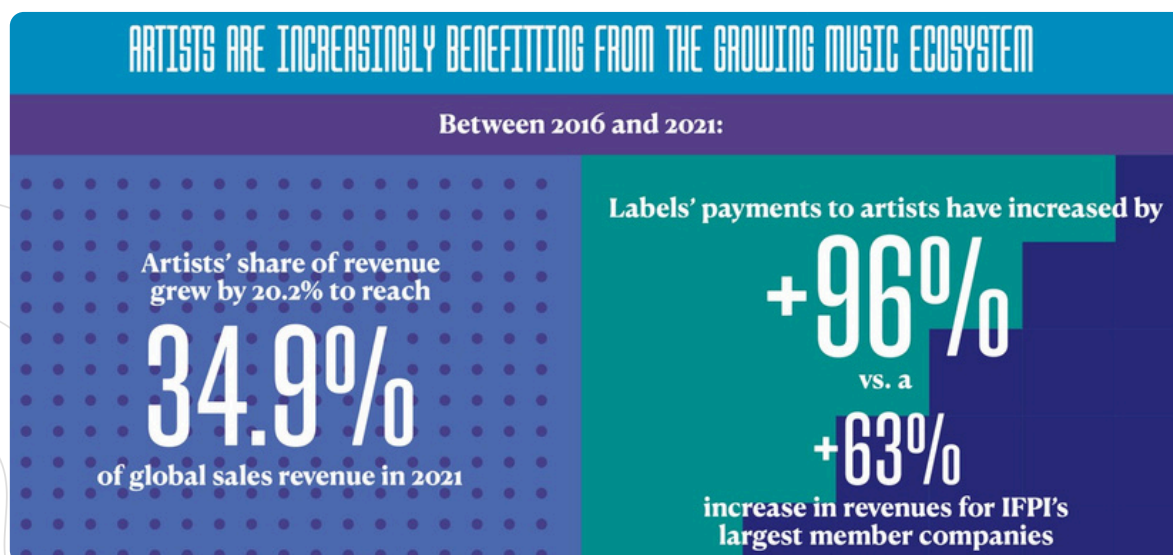
We see ourselves as a creative enterprise and a funding partner for talent in a whole new way. It's not just about putting out the music, it's about helping each artist to create that unique universe, and making sure their story is communicated to the right people on the right platforms at the right time. It's very exciting, I think, because it's not just about capturing people's attention for three minutes, it's about bringing people into the artist's world. That's what artist development means to us today.



Joakim Johansson

President, Nordics, Universal Music Group

(Joakim Johansson, President, Nordics, Universal Music Group, in IFPI, 2024C, *Music in the EU 2024*)



IFPI (2024A). *Global Music Report 2024*. Available at: <https://globalmusicreport.ifpi.org>

Distribution for Independent musicians

However, many musicians choose to remain independent to maintain full creative and financial control over their work. Without a record label, they can decide their artistic direction, release schedules, and branding without external influence. Financially, independence allows artists to retain ownership of their masters and a larger share of their earnings from streaming, sales, and merchandise. With digital distribution platforms like the ones explored below, independent musicians can release music worldwide without relying on a label, while social media and crowdfunding platforms provide direct access to fans for promotion and financial support.

Remaining independent also means avoiding the pressures and constraints that come with major label deals, such as meeting commercial expectations or following industry trends. Artists can experiment with their music, connect directly with their audience, and build a career on their own terms. While independence requires handling marketing, financing, and promotion independently, many artists find the freedom and long-term benefits outweigh the challenges of not having a label's backing.

Music distribution plays a crucial role in the recording industry, with various types of companies offering distinct services. Here we look at the 5 different types of distribution partners available to independent artists:

- **Independent Distribution Services from Major Distributors**
- **Independent Distribution Partners**
- **White-label Distribution Solutions**
- **Open Distribution Platforms/Aggregators**
- **Semi-label Distribution Services**

Independent Distribution Services from Major Labels

Major labels operate their own distribution departments, leveraging their massive catalogues to negotiate directly with Digital Service Providers (DSPs) like Spotify. This dominance allows them to control a significant portion of the

industry, with independent labels often relying on major-affiliated distributors. Some major labels have a partner company which offers independent distribution services.

ADA (Warner Music Group): ADA (Alternative Distribution Alliance) is Warner Music Group's independent distribution arm, offering services like global distribution, marketing, and promotion to independent artists and labels. ADA helps clients reach major DSPs like Spotify and Apple Music while maintaining creative independence.

Virgin Music (Universal Music Group): Originally a record label, Virgin Music now operates as a global independent music distribution and services company under Universal Music Group. It provides digital and physical distribution, marketing, and artist development, supporting independent labels and artists worldwide.

The Orchard (Sony Music): The Orchard is Sony Music's independent distribution and artist services company. It delivers comprehensive solutions, including music and video distribution, analytics, and marketing, enabling independent artists and labels to distribute their work across digital and physical platforms globally.

Independent Distribution Partners

For top-tier independent artists, independent distribution partners offer an alternative. Companies like Believe, Idol, and Redeye Worldwide provide hands-on promotional support, strategic marketing, and digital release planning, often in exchange for a percentage of royalties. These partnerships require artists to prove their commercial viability, making them more selective than open platforms. Although some of these independent companies have been acquired by majors, several remain key players in the industry, catering to high-performing independent labels and artists.

Absolute

<https://absolutelabelservices.com>

Absolute Label Services offers tailored distribution and marketing solutions for independent artists and labels, focusing on personalized strategies to maximize reach and engagement. Their flexible, hands-on approach makes them a great fit for mid-to-large independent acts and labels seeking dedicated support without giving up creative control.

Believe

<https://www.believe.com/artist-services>

Believe provides comprehensive artist services, including digital distribution, marketing, and promotion. With a global network and local expertise, they are ideal for independent artists aiming to build international audiences. Their tiered services, including Label & Artist Solutions and Believe Artist Services, are perfect for both emerging artists and established acts seeking scalable growth.

Ditto Plus

<https://plus.dittomusic.com/who-are-we>

Ditto Plus offers premium distribution with a focus on personalized artist support. Their services are best suited for independent artists looking to grow their fan base while maintaining full control of their music. The added industry guidance makes them a strong option for up-and-coming acts ready to take the next step.

Idol

<https://idol.io/what-we-do>

Idol specializes in digital distribution and marketing, helping artists and labels increase their visibility and revenue. Their curated approach and selective roster make them ideal for independent labels and established artists seeking dedicated digital strategy and long-term growth.

Octiive

<https://www.octiive.com>

Octiive provides global music distribution with tools for promotion, analytics, and revenue tracking. With affordable pricing and easy-to-use features, they're a great choice for independent musicians, DIY artists, and small labels looking to distribute music on major streaming platforms without complicated contracts.

Record Union

<https://recordunion.com>

Record Union offers distribution to platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and TikTok, along with features such as royalty splits, smart links, and an A&R network. Their straightforward platform is particularly well-suited for solo artists, independent bands, and DIY musicians seeking affordable and hassle-free distribution with added collaborative tools.

Redeye Worldwide

<https://www.redeyeworldwide.com>

Redeye offers global distribution, marketing, and label services, with a focus on personalized support. Their hybrid approach—combining physical and digital distribution—makes them a great fit for independent labels and artists with physical product needs, such as vinyl releases, as well as acts seeking a wider international presence.

ReverbNation

<https://www.reverbnation.com>

Known for its artist growth platform, ReverbNation provides digital distribution, promotional tools, and fan engagement features. Their extensive network and exposure opportunities make them perfect for emerging artists looking to grow their fan base, secure live gigs, and gain industry recognition.

Songtradr

<https://www.songtradr.com>

Songtradr specializes in music licensing and distribution, connecting artists with opportunities for sync placements in TV, film, and ads. Their platform is ideal for composers, producers, and artists seeking to monetize their music through licensing while still distributing to streaming platforms.

Stem

<https://stem.is>

Stem offers financial tools like revenue tracking, royalty splits, and payment solutions, simplifying the business side of music distribution. They are well-suited for artists, managers, and labels who need transparent and efficient financial management, particularly those with multiple collaborators.

Symphonic

<https://symphonic.com/technology>

Symphonic provides digital and video distribution, rights management, and marketing. Their robust technology and artist-friendly features, such as royalty splits and UGC tracking, make them a great option for independent artists, producers, and labels looking to maximize both revenue and exposure across platforms.

White-label Distribution Solutions

Another distribution model involves white-label solutions, which provide technical infrastructure for labels that handle their own distribution.

Companies like Consolidated Independent and FUGA act as digital supply chain providers, delivering music and metadata to DSPs while allowing labels to maintain control over marketing and strategy. These services primarily cater to larger independent labels and other distributors in need of a scalable technical pipeline rather than smaller, emerging artists.

Consolidated Independent (CI)

<https://ci-info.com>

Consolidated Independent offers digital supply chain services that enable record labels, distributors, and music businesses to deliver music and metadata to DSPs globally. Their platform emphasizes flexibility and customization, making them ideal for medium-to-large independent labels and distributors that require scalable infrastructure while maintaining full control over their marketing and artist relationships. CI is particularly well-suited for businesses managing extensive catalogs and seeking robust technical solutions.

FUGA

<https://fuga.com/about/>

FUGA provides end-to-end digital distribution, marketing, and rights management solutions tailored to independent labels, management companies, and distributors. Their platform offers advanced analytics, royalty reporting, and promotional tools, supporting global distribution across DSPs. With a focus on scalability and customization, FUGA is best suited for established labels and music companies looking to streamline their operations while retaining control of their brand and strategy.

SonoSuite

<https://sonosuite.com/en/>

SonoSuite delivers white-label distribution technology, empowering labels and music businesses to distribute music globally under their own brand. Their platform offers automated content delivery, royalty reporting, and analytics, with a focus on user-friendliness and scalability. SonoSuite is an excellent option for independent labels, distributors, and music startups seeking an affordable, customizable solution to manage their digital supply chain without the need for extensive technical infrastructure.

These white-label solutions primarily benefit larger independent labels and distributors that need efficient and scalable technical pipelines, rather than individual artists or smaller music acts. Each platform offers different levels of customization and analytics, catering to businesses looking to optimize their digital distribution while maintaining control over their marketing and branding strategies.

Open Distribution Platforms/Aggregators

Open distribution platforms such as TuneCore, CD Baby, and DistroKid offer accessible, cost-effective solutions for independent artists looking to distribute their music globally. These platforms charge fees based on per-song/album pricing, annual subscriptions, or commission-based models. While they provide an easy entry point, their promotional capabilities are limited, as they serve vast numbers of artists. Some, like Boost Collective, aim to go beyond simple distribution by incorporating artist development services.

Boost Collective

<https://www.boost-collective.com/music-distribution>

Boost Collective offers free music distribution to major DSPs, with additional services for artist development, branding, and promotion. This platform is ideal for independent artists seeking both distribution and career-building tools without upfront costs.

CD Baby

<https://cdbaby.com>

CD Baby provides global music distribution with a one-time fee per release and no annual fees. Their services also include royalty collection and sync licensing, making them a great choice for independent artists looking for straightforward distribution and additional revenue opportunities.

DistroKid

<https://distrokid.com>

DistroKid offers unlimited music distribution for a flat annual fee, allowing independent artists and bands to upload as much music as they want. Known for its simplicity, fast uploads, and direct payments, DistroKid is a popular choice for DIY musicians seeking quick and affordable global distribution.

Ditto Music

<https://dittomusic.com/en/sell-your-music>

Ditto Music provides unlimited distribution for a flat annual fee, with tools for music promotion, playlist pitching, and royalty management. Their services are well-suited for independent artists, bands, and small labels looking to distribute music worldwide while retaining 100% of their royalties.

Horus Music

<https://www.horusmusic.global/company/about-us/>

Horus Music offers global music distribution with flexible pricing options, including pay-per-release and subscription models. Their personalized services, including marketing and sync licensing, make them a great choice for independent artists seeking additional promotional support.

iMusician

<https://imusician.pro/en/about-us>

iMusician provides digital distribution with a pay-per-release model, offering artists full control over their music and royalties. Their easy-to-use platform and dedicated customer support make them a good fit for independent musicians and labels looking to distribute music worldwide.

Landr

<https://www.landr.com/digital-distribution/>

Landr combines digital distribution with AI-powered mastering and promotional tools. Their flexible pricing plans and additional creative services make them ideal for independent artists looking to enhance their sound and reach a global audience.

Level Music

<https://support.levelmusic.com/hc/en-us>

Level Music offers free and affordable distribution options, making it accessible for emerging independent artists. Their simple platform is best for DIY musicians seeking a low-cost way to distribute their music while retaining control over their careers.

Music Gateway

<https://www.musicgateway.com>

Music Gateway provides music distribution alongside tools for sync licensing, promotion, and music management. Their platform is well-suited for independent artists and bands looking to grow their careers through both distribution and industry opportunities.

ONErpm

<https://onerpm.com>

ONErpm offers free music distribution with optional marketing and promotional services. Their platform is designed for independent artists, labels, and creators looking to distribute their music globally while accessing additional tools to grow their audience.

Route Note

<https://www.routenote.com>

Route Note provides both free and premium music distribution, allowing artists to choose between a commission-based model or paying a fee to keep 100% of their royalties. Their flexible approach makes them suitable for independent musicians at all stages of their careers.

Soundrop

<https://soundrop.com>

Soundrop specializes in distributing cover songs and collaborative music projects, with affordable pricing and automated royalty splits. Their platform is perfect for artists releasing covers, remixes, and collaborative tracks on streaming platforms.

TuneCore

<https://www.tunecore.com>

TuneCore offers digital distribution with a pay-per-release or subscription model, enabling artists to distribute music globally while retaining 100% of their royalties. Their platform is ideal for independent musicians seeking straightforward, reliable distribution.

United Masters

<https://unitedmasters.com/en/artists>

United Masters offers free and premium distribution services, with additional opportunities for brand partnerships, sync licensing, and playlist placements. Their platform is designed for independent artists looking to distribute their music globally while accessing industry opportunities.

These platforms provide accessible, cost-effective solutions for independent artists, with different pricing models and service offerings to suit various needs. While their promotional capabilities may be limited compared to label services, their ease of use and global reach make them essential tools for DIY musicians.

Semi-label Distribution Services

A newer category, semi-label distribution services, includes companies like AWAL and Amuse, which operate as a bridge between independent distribution and traditional record labels. These companies provide basic distribution for free or at a low cost, using data-driven insights to identify successful artists who can then be offered enhanced promotional support or record licensing deals. This model reflects a broader industry trend where labels shift from record-making to marketing-based licensing agreements. Over time, distribution companies may further evolve to take on functions traditionally associated with record labels, signalling a potential transformation in the music business landscape.

Amuse

<https://www.amuse.io/en/dreamfactory/dream-factory-2024/>

Amuse provides free digital music distribution with data-driven tools to help independent artists grow their careers. By analyzing streaming data, Amuse identifies promising talent and offers select artists licensing deals that include marketing, promotion, and financial support. Their free distribution service is ideal for emerging artists seeking global reach, while their licensing model is well-suited for those who demonstrate strong audience engagement and growth potential.

AWAL

<https://www.awal.com/how-it-works/>

AWAL offers digital distribution with a focus on empowering independent artists while providing advanced tools for audience analytics, royalty collection, and promotional support. Unlike traditional labels, AWAL operates on a partnership model, allowing artists to retain ownership of their music while accessing marketing services and playlist placements. AWAL is best suited for artists with a proven track record of success who are seeking additional resources to expand their global reach.

These semi-label services act as a bridge between independent distribution and traditional label deals, using data insights to identify talent and offer support as artists grow. Their free or low-cost entry points make them accessible to emerging artists, while their licensing models provide advanced services for those who achieve measurable success, reflecting the music industry's shift toward marketing-based partnerships.

Here are some interesting articles comparing distribution services:

Soundcharts Blog (2024). The Mechanics of Music Distribution: How it Works, Types of Music Distribution Companies + 35 Top Distributors (01 Jan, 2024). [online].

<https://soundcharts.com/blog/music-distribution>

Soundcamps (2024). 7 Best Music Distribution Services in 2025 (Full Comparison) (Dec 19, 2024). [online]. <https://soundcamps.com/blog/best-music-distribution-services/>

OneSubmit (2025) Best 11 Music Distribution Services to Use in 2025. [online]. <https://www.one-submit.com/post/best-music-distribution-services>

In Music Industry Weekly, Brandon Stein (2025) identifies key issues for music creators to watch in 2025:

- the evolution of streaming revenue models
- the emergence of new platforms
- integration of artificial intelligence in music creation and copyright protection
- the rise of virtual concerts and live streaming, and an emphasis on ethical and sustainable practices

Music Industry Weekly contends that the rise of artist-owned platforms signals a major shift in the music industry, allowing musicians to regain control over distribution, revenue, and fan engagement. Platforms like Tidal, Bandcamp, and Patreon enable artists to bypass traditional gatekeepers, offering direct-to-fan sales, fairer compensation, and greater creative freedom. This shift addresses long-standing frustrations with low streaming payouts and restrictive contracts, pushing major labels and DSPs to adapt. While challenges remain, such as marketing responsibilities and audience building, the benefits of ownership and sustainability make these platforms an increasingly viable option for artists navigating the evolving music landscape.

(Music Industry Weekly, 2024).

Video Monetization

Over-the-top (OTT) media services, such as YouTube and Twitch, have revolutionized content distribution by offering creators new ways to monetize their videos. With the revenue per user in this industry averaging \$62.65 in 2022, creators have strong incentives to explore video monetization platforms. Whether seasoned or new to content creation, individuals can leverage these platforms to grow their audience and earnings. Hewko (2024) explores various monetization models in ***15 Best Video Monetization Platforms in 2024***, including:

- **Subscription-based video on demand (SVOD):** Users pay a recurring fee for unlimited access.
- **Transactional video on demand (TVOD):** Operates on a pay-per-view basis.
- **Hybrid models:** A combination of SVOD and TVOD to maximize revenue. For instance, Apple TV charges a monthly fee while allowing users to pay extra for premium content.

As video consumption continues to rise, selecting the right platform is crucial for maximizing revenue and engagement. The article provides an in-depth analysis of the top video monetization platforms in 2024, helping creators find the best tools to grow their brand and earnings.

15 Best Video Monetization Platforms in 2024

YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/howyoutubeworks/policies/monetization-policies/>

YouTube offers multiple monetization options, including ad revenue, channel memberships, and Super Chat during live streams. Ideal for music acts looking to build a broad audience, showcase music videos, and generate revenue through ad views and fan support.

Patreon

<https://creatorhub.patreon.com/articles/how-to-earn-money-on-patreon>

Patreon enables artists to earn recurring income by offering exclusive content to subscribers. Best suited for musicians with dedicated fanbases willing to support their work through monthly subscriptions.

The Leap

<https://www.theleap.co/features/link-in-bio-store/>

The Leap allows creators to sell digital products, courses, and exclusive content through their bio link. Great for music acts offering tutorials, sheet music, or exclusive performance videos.

Linktree

<https://linktr.ee/s/creator/monetize-with-linktree-pro>

Linktree Pro helps musicians monetize their content by integrating payment links and promoting music across platforms. Useful for independent artists looking to centralize their content and income streams.

Cleeng

<https://cleeng.com>

Cleeng offers SVOD, TVOD, and hybrid monetization models, ideal for artists hosting virtual concerts or selling video-on-demand performances.

Thinkific

<https://support.thinkific.com/hc/en-us/articles/9995366884503-Selling-Strategies-for-Monetizing-your-Community>

Thinkific allows musicians to create and sell online courses, perfect for artists teaching music lessons, production techniques, or music business insights.

Muvi

<https://www.muvi.com/one/features/multiple-monetizations/>

Muvi offers SVOD, TVOD, and ad-supported models, enabling artists to build branded platforms for streaming concerts, music videos, and behind-the-scenes content.

Dacast

<https://www.dacast.com/video-monetization/>

Dacast provides ad-based, subscription, and pay-per-view monetization options, ideal for artists hosting ticketed live streams and virtual concerts.

Kaltura

<https://corp.kaltura.com/video-platform-for-publishers/>

Kaltura's customizable video platform supports SVOD and TVOD models, making it suitable for music labels and artists offering exclusive video content.

TikTok

<https://support.tiktok.com/en/business-and-creator>

TikTok offers monetization through its Creator Fund, live gifts, and brand collaborations. Ideal for music acts looking to reach younger audiences, promote new music, and go viral.

Vimeo OTT

<https://vimeo.com/solutions/video-monetization>

Vimeo OTT allows artists to launch their own subscription-based streaming services, making it perfect for offering exclusive concerts, music documentaries, and premium content.

Brightcove

<https://www.brightcove.com/why-brightcove/monetize-content/>

Brightcove's video platform supports SVOD, TVOD, and ad-based models, ideal for labels and artists seeking scalable solutions for video distribution and monetization.

VlogBox

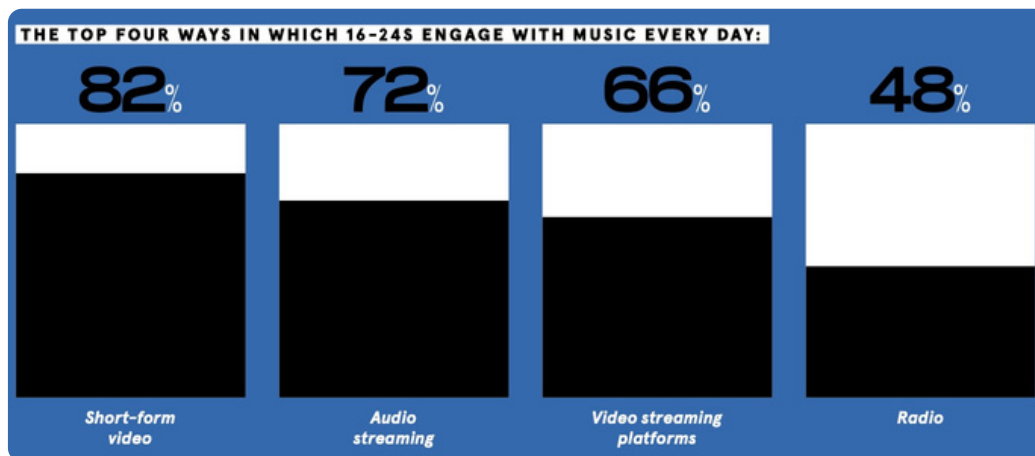
<https://vlogbox.com/monetize/>

VlogBox helps creators monetize video content through CTV (connected TV) platforms like Roku and Amazon Fire TV, offering new revenue streams for music acts producing long-form video content.

These platforms offer diverse monetization models, catering to independent artists, labels, and creators seeking to maximize revenue through subscription-based services, pay-per-view events, and advertising.

Hewko, Alexandria (2024) 15 Best Video Monetization Platforms in 2024 (Jul 15, 2024) [online]. <https://www.theleap.co/blog/best-video-monetization-platforms/>

It is also important to consider the trends in the preferred formats of your target audience. Among 16-24-year-olds, daily music engagement is dominated by short-form video, with 82% consuming music through platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels. Audio streaming follows closely, with 72% using services such as Spotify and Apple Music to listen to their favourite tracks. Video-streaming platforms, including YouTube, remain popular, with 66% tuning in for music-related content. Traditional radio still holds relevance, with 48% of young listeners tuning in each day, but harnessing video formats, especially short-form has become an essential tool for marketing – especially to younger listeners.



IFPI (2023). *Engaging with Music 2023*. Available at:
https://www.ifpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/IFPI-Engaging-With-Music-2023_full-report.pdf

Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Threats

European music has long held cultural, social, and economic significance, with policymakers supporting its growth through initiatives like Music Moves Europe and ETEP. Record labels play a crucial role in nurturing artists, investing \$7.1 billion annually in A&R and marketing to drive innovation and connect artists with audiences worldwide. To maintain the strength of Europe's music industry, public policies must reflect its contributions and global potential. However, the industry now faces both opportunities and challenges, particularly regarding the ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) in music creation and distribution. (IFPI, 2024C).

Generative AI poses a serious threat to artists and rightsholders, as many AI developers are using copyrighted music without authorization or compensation. The industry argues that this practice is both "morally wrong and illegal," highlighting concerns about deepfake content that mimics artists' voices and likenesses without consent. Such AI-generated content can mislead fans, harm an artist's reputation, and unfairly compete in the market. The newly enacted EU AI Act is a positive step toward AI regulation, but the industry insists that its enforcement must ensure that "AI developers maintain and provide records of the materials used in training and developing the model" to allow rightsholders to protect their work.

Additionally, Europe must strengthen copyright enforcement to combat digital piracy, as current mechanisms are often "slow, costly, and ineffective." Many infringing websites continue to operate across Europe due to inconsistencies in the implementation of the EU's IP Enforcement Directive. The European Commission is urged to fully enforce existing laws, ensuring that rightsholders have effective legal tools to prevent unauthorized use of music. Measures such as a 'notice and stay down' system could prevent repeated copyright violations, and platforms should be required to hold sufficient user data to prevent anonymous piracy.

The IFPI also calls for strict AI compliance, warning that non-compliance with AI rules should lead to "meaningful sanctions" to deter misconduct.

Ensuring EU-wide copyright enforcement and regulating AI's use in music are vital to preserving the integrity of Europe's creative sector. By implementing stronger intellectual property protections and AI regulations, policymakers can support artists, protect their rights, and maintain Europe's global influence in the music industry.

However, Krause (2024) argues that artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the music industry, offering opportunities for automation, scalability, and creative expansion. AI-powered platforms like AIWA and Amper Music enable musicians and businesses to generate music with minimal input, raising questions about copyright and ownership. He does acknowledge that AI also presents risks, such as fraud and exploitation, citing the case of Michael Smith, who allegedly scammed streaming services out of \$10 million using AI-generated songs and bot accounts, highlights these dangers. To balance innovation and protection, he argues, industry stakeholders must implement stronger regulations, transparent royalty systems, and ethical AI development to safeguard creators' rights in an increasingly AI-driven landscape.

University of Agder researcher, Steinar Jeffs (cited in University of Agder, 2024), argues that while AI-generated content has already displaced illustrators in advertising, music is different. **"Artificial intelligence is not a threat to music,"** he says, explaining that musicians create because they value the process itself. As AI tools assist in songwriting and production, some artists embrace them for experimentation and efficiency, while others worry that AI-generated music could become overly polished and formulaic. The growing appetite for raw, authentic artistry suggests that AI will supplement, rather than replace, human creativity.

However, AI is already disrupting musicians' livelihoods in areas like background music, jingles, and transcription work. Streaming has diminished income from recorded music, making live performances more critical, but Jeffs believes AI will not replace concerts. **"AI will not take over the concert market. People will always be interested in what other people do,"** he says. While AI democratizes music creation and offers new opportunities, Jeffs warns that without deep engagement in the craft,

future artists may struggle to produce work that truly resonates. Despite these challenges, he remains optimistic, seeing AI as a tool that, when used thoughtfully, can enhance rather than undermine musical creativity.

IFPI: Reservations of Rights

The founding principle of intellectual property rights is that right holders can authorise or prohibit the use of the rights they own or control. Copyright holders can exercise their rights through a variety of ways including by making general or specific reservations of rights. A general reservation would apply across rights and use cases, including to the use of sound recordings by artificial intelligence platforms.

Here are some examples of copyright declarations that aim to offer some protection in relation to text and data mining by AI:

Beggars Group Limited:

<https://beggars.com/reservation-of-rights-ai/>

Concord Music Group:

<https://concord.com/declaration-of-use/>

Sony Music Entertainment:

<https://www.sonymusic.com/sonymusic/declaration-of-ai-training-opt-out/>

Sugar Group:

<https://www.sugarmusic.com/ai-reserving-rights/>

Universal Music Group:

<https://www.universalmusic.com/umg-reservation-of-rights/>

Warner Music Group:

<https://www.wmg.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/WMG-Statement-Regarding-AI-Technologies.pdf>

Links from: IFPI (n.d.B). Reservation of Rights [online].
<https://www.ifpi.org/ifpi-priorities/reservations-of-rights/>

Major music companies have updated their copyright declarations to prevent unauthorized use of their content for AI training and text data mining. Universal Music Group (UMG) and Sony Music Entertainment offer the broadest protection, explicitly covering AI training and derivative works. Beggars Group Limited and Warner Music Group (WMG) provide detailed guidelines that clarify restrictions for both digital and non-digital uses. Sugar Group and Concord Music Group also emphasize preserving their catalogues for creative and commercial purposes, ensuring compliance with copyright laws.

The key differences lie in the scope and specificity of protection. While UMG and Sony Music highlight enforcement measures, Beggars Group and WMG focus on defining unauthorized AI usage. All companies stress the importance of protecting artists' intellectual property in an era of evolving AI technologies. These declarations collectively represent the music industry's commitment to safeguarding creative works against misuse, ensuring artists retain control over their content in both traditional and digital spaces.

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