

PART 2

Sounds and Images



The dominant media of the twentieth century were all about sounds and images: music, radio, television, and film. Each of these media industries was built around a handful of powerful groups—record labels, radio networks, television networks, and film studios—that set the terms for creating and distributing this popular media content. The main story of these media industries was one of ever-improving technology. For example, television moved from black and white to color, from analog broadcast transmissions to digital cable.

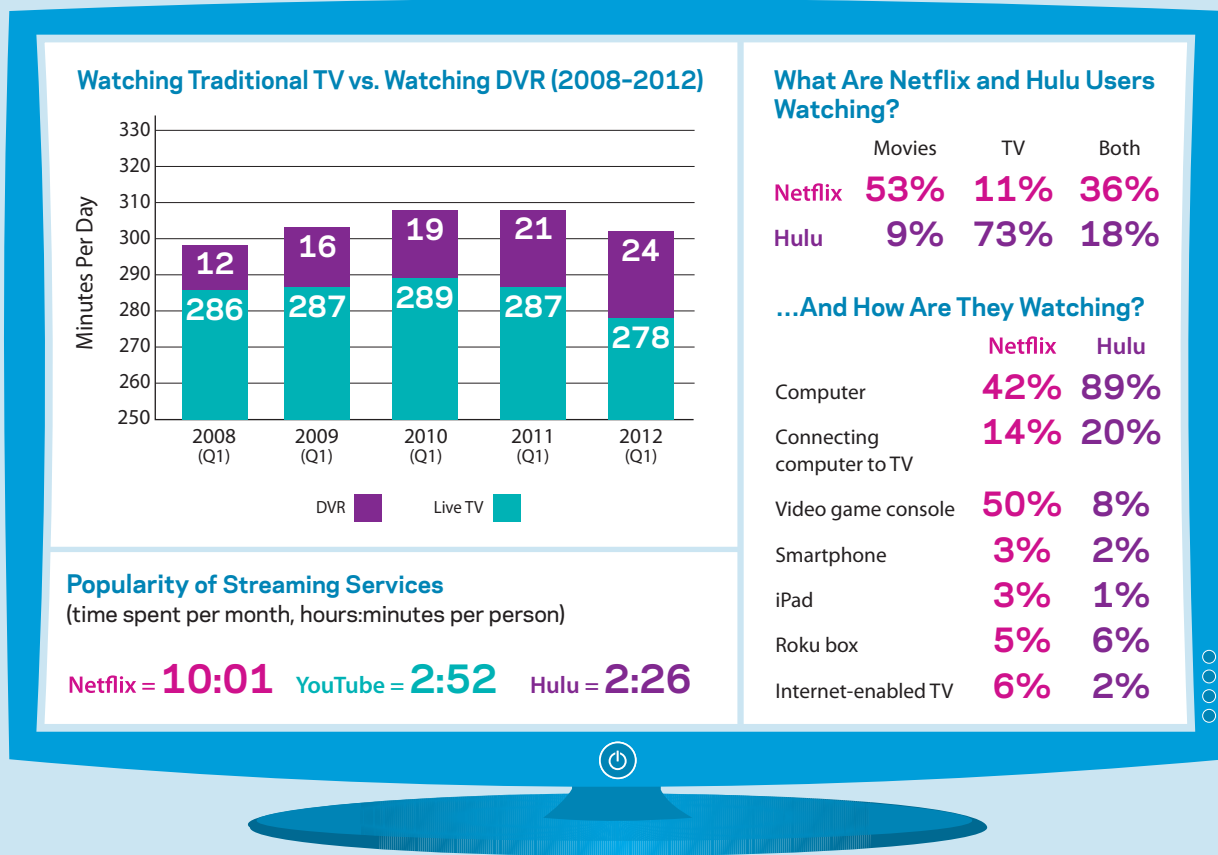
Music, radio, TV, and movies are still significant media in our lives. But convergence and the digital turn have changed the story of our sound and image media. Starting with the music industry and the introduction of Napster in 1999, one by one these media industries have had to cope with revolutionary changes. More than a decade later, the traditional media corporations have much less power in dictating what we listen to and watch. The narrative of ever-improving technology has been upended and replaced with wholly different technology.

We now live in a world in which any and all media can be consumed via the Internet on laptops, tablets, smartphones, and video game consoles. As a result, we have seen the demise of record stores and video stores, local radio deejays, and the big network TV hit. Traditional media corporations are playing catch-up, devising new online services to bring their offerings to us and still make money. (Hulu, NBC.com, and iHeartRadio are good examples.) Meanwhile, start-up technology and content companies and anyone with a video camera and a YouTube account are competing with the major media corporations on the same Internet playing field. Pandora, iTunes, Vevo, YouTube, Amazon.com, and Netflix have all become significant distributors of sounds and images.

Moreover, as we consume all types of media content on a single device or through a single service, the traditionally separate “identities” of music, radio, television, and film have become blurred. For example, people might download a radio podcast and the latest pop single onto their iPods, or stream an album on a subscription service like Spotify and then switch to listening to its radio function. Similarly, more and more people are choosing to watch their video content on Netflix or Hulu—where TV programs and movies exist side by side.

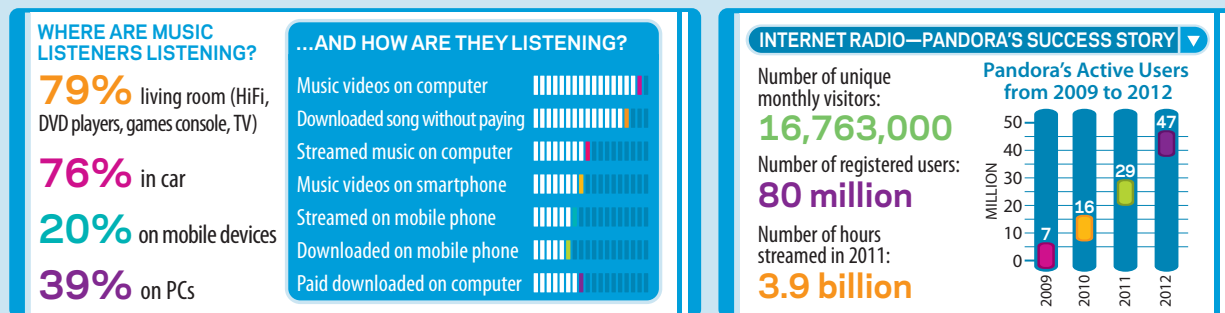
The major media of the twentieth century are mostly still with us, but the twenty-first-century story of what form that content will take, how we will experience it, and even what we might call the activity (we may need new words for watching a bunch of TV episodes in a row online, or creating a customized Internet radio channel) is still up for grabs.

How We Watch TV, Movies, and Video Today



How We Listen to Music and Radio Today

Digital listening is on the rise. Digital channels now account for an estimated 32% of record company revenues globally. This compares with 5% for newspapers, 4% for books, and 1% for films.



1 Do you regularly stream music, movie, or TV content through Netflix, Hulu, Pandora, or some other service? If so, consider how much time you spend streaming, and compare it to how much time you spend consuming the same media in their "traditional" settings (e.g., at a movie theater, using a music player).

2 Streaming means we never really "own" the digital files we listen to and watch, but rather lease or rent them from one service or another. What are some possible drawbacks to this?

See Notes for list of sources.

Changing Formats



Thanks to the digital turn, our sound and image media have moved from physical formats and wired delivery systems to digital files in the “cloud” and wireless distribution.

- The tin foil cylinders, shellac and vinyl records, and cassette tapes—all analog formats—gave way to the 0s and 1s of digitally produced music. Ironically, the first digital music format was the CD—a physical product (Chapter 4, pages 122–125).
- The sounds of radio were transmitted wirelessly through analog electromagnetic waves for more than a hundred years (Chapter 5, pages 159–162). But broadcast radio is now in competition with Internet alternatives (Chapter 5, page 183).
- Television shows broadcast through terrestrial antennas, cable wires, and satellite (Chapter 6, pages 201–202) are now converted into digital files and streamed through services like YouTube, Hulu, and Netflix (Chapter 6, pages 207–209).
- The flexible celluloid film that looped through film cameras and then projectors was a fixed part of film production for more than a hundred years (Chapter 7, pages 242–244). Today, the production, distribution, and exhibition processes are, for the most part, entirely digital (Chapter 7, pages 266–267).

Piracy and Changing Economics



As digital technology made audio and video production affordable to amateurs, it broke the hold media corporations had over producing and distributing media content, changing media economics and creating opportunities for media pirates to exploit.

- The recording industry threw its weight against Internet piracy but was slow to shift distribution to for-profit digital distribution (Chapter 4, page 127).
- Digital music in the recording industry creates several new opportunities for revenue but unclear systems for sharing royalties with artists (Chapter 4, pages 145–149).
- Government regulators and the recording industry responded to digital streaming radio music services with oppressively high performance royalty rates (Chapter 4, page 147).
- Meanwhile, the broadcast radio industry has long paid no performance royalties to artists, which streaming services called unfair (Chapter 5, page 183).
- The movie industry, concerned that downloading and streaming will cannibalize box-office and DVD sales and undermine movie theaters, has been slow to embrace Internet distribution for newer releases (Chapter 7, pages 266–267).

Fragmenting Audiences

Producing mass media used to mean producing for a single mass audience, but today convergence has led to smaller “niche” audiences: We have more choice, but we also don’t listen or watch content in the same way as previous generations.

- The radio show *Amos 'n' Andy* was so popular in the 1930s that restaurants and movie theaters would need to broadcast it to their customers or else lose their business (Chapter 5, page 171). With Internet radio sites, users can tailor their experience by creating stations based on a single artist or even a song (Chapter 5, page 183).
- Prior to the 1980s, discussion at school or work used to revolve around what was on the three main television networks the night before. Now, only Super Bowl broadcasts and crisis news coverage bring people together around television the same way (Chapter 6, pages 226–227).
- The development of cable introduced the idea of narrowcasting (Chapter 6, page 202). In 2011 and 2012, YouTube launched more than a hundred channels of original programming, each devoted to a niche topic, ensuring even more choice and further fragmenting audiences (Chapter 6, page 227).
- The peak movie audience was in 1946, at 90 million a week (at a time when the entire national population was 141 million). With multiple avenues for watching movies, today’s box-office revenue is sustained by a much smaller audience (Chapter 7, pages 265–266).
- With such fragmented media, is the era of a “mass” audience over (Chapter 1, page 5)?




Convergence Benefits Independent Media Makers

While digital convergence has upset the economics of the traditional media industries, it has created opportunities for alternative voices of independent media makers.

- Some sound recording artists are distributing their work directly to their audience, and even engaging their audience as investors in music projects (Chapter 4, pages 119–120).
- Web shows offer outlets for producers who want to do shows that might be too experimental or niche for broadcast or cable networks (Chapter 6, pages 228–229).
- Digital technology makes filmmaking within reach; young filmmakers created the hit *Paranormal Activity* (2007) for the cost of an inexpensive car (Chapter 7, page 267).



 For more on Internet users creating their own content, watch the “User-Generated Content” video on *VideoCentral: Mass Communication* at bedfordstmartins.com/mediaculture.



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Sound Recording and Popular Music

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The story of how “Same Love,” by Seattle rapper/producer duo Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, became one of the top songs of the summer of 2013 is also the story of how the music industry has been completely upended in the last fifteen years.

Macklemore, a relatively older rapper at age thirty, began 2013 with the *Billboard* No. 1 hit, “Thrift Shop.” The video for the song was posted on YouTube the previous summer, and had generated more than 380 million views a year later. Most interesting about this success is that Macklemore & Ryan Lewis can take credit for it: They don’t have a recording contract. The quirky repeating saxophone line and irreverent lyrics made “Thrift Shop” the first No. 1 hit from an independent group since 1994.¹ They did it again later in 2013, hitting the top spot again with “Can’t Hold Us.”

Their success had already defied the typical when they released the song “Same Love,” written and recorded in 2012 as a way to support Macklemore’s gay uncle, his uncle’s partner, and his gay godfather—and also after he read a report of a bullied teenager who committed

suicide.² The song became an anthem for support of Referendum 74, a measure to uphold same-sex marriage in Washington state. It would soon have national resonance.

Although other songs, such as Lady Gaga's "Born This Way," have addressed the battle for gay equality, "Same Love" is one of the most politically direct songs to emerge as a hit in decades. (One would have to go back to rock and roll's protest years in the Vietnam War era to find a major hit as pointed.) Macklemore targets politics in the song ("The right wing conservatives think it's a decision/And you can be cured with some treatment and religion") and his own form of music ("If I was gay, I would think hip-hop hates me/Have you read the YouTube comments lately?"). The refrain, by openly gay singer Mary Lambert, laments "I can't change/Even if I tried/Even if I wanted to."

Corporate radio was not hot on the trail of this song. But with sixty million YouTube views by the summer of 2013, some radio programmers understood the song's connection to larger issues in the nation (the U.S. Supreme Court's decisions that summer upholding California's gay marriage law, and overturning the Defense of Marriage Act, which had denied federal recognition of same-sex marriage since 1996). Other radio programmers, particularly at reluctant hip-hop stations, eventually responded to listener demand, and the song raced up the music charts.

In today's sound recording business, industry revenues have leveled out and in 2012, global music sales actually increased for the first time since 1999 (the year of Napster's arrival).³ But the industry is half its former size, and many artists, like Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, are finding that they can leverage the Internet to reach a fan base without the help of a big music label.

Big stars with enormous recording contracts—like Adele, Beyoncé, and Taylor Swift—still remain. But even their paths have changed: Adele became famous through MySpace, while Beyoncé and Swift have become bigger than their recording contracts, gaining millions in endorsements and sponsorships to chart their own career courses.

Given their new fame and fortune, one might expect Macklemore & Ryan Lewis to entertain major-label offers. Yet they've already addressed that scenario in another song titled "Jimmy Iovine," named after the chairman of Universal Music Group's hip-hop powerhouse label, Interscope Geffen A&M. In the song, the artists finally make it to their dream, a visit to Iovine's office. Then they reconsider: "I replied I appreciate the offer, thought that this is what I wanted/Rather be a starving artist than succeed at getting f—ed."

The digital turn in the music industry has changed the calculus for musical artists. Macklemore proves that it's possible to shun the big contract and not end up a starving artist.

▲ **THE MEDIUM OF SOUND RECORDING** has had an immense impact on our culture. The music that helps shape our identities and comforts us during the transition from childhood to adulthood resonates throughout our lives, and it often stirs debate among parents and teenagers, teachers and students, and politicians and performers, many times leading to social change. Throughout its history, popular music has been banned by parents, school officials, and even governments under the guise of protecting young people from corrupting influences. As far back as the late 1700s, authorities in Europe, thinking that it was immoral for young people to dance close together, outlawed waltz music as “savagery.” Between the 1920s and the 1940s, jazz music was criticized for its unbridled and sometimes free-form sound and the unrestrained dance crazes (such as the Charleston and the jitterbug) it inspired. Rock and roll from the 1950s onward and hip-hop from the 1980s to today have also added their own chapters to the age-old musical battle between generations.

In this chapter, we will place the impact of popular music in context and:

- Investigate the origins of recording’s technological “hardware,” from Thomas Edison’s early phonograph to Emile Berliner’s invention of the flat disk record and the development of audiotape, compact discs, and MP3s
- Study radio’s early threat to sound recording and the subsequent alliance between the two media when television arrived in the 1950s
- Explore the impact of the Internet on music, including the effects of online piracy and how the industry is adapting to the new era of convergence with new models for distributing and promoting music
- Examine the content and culture of the music industry, focusing on the predominant role of rock music and its extraordinary impact on mass media forms and a diverse array of cultures, both American and international
- Explore the economic and democratic issues facing the recording industry

As you consider these topics, think about your own relationship with popular music and sound recordings. Who was your first favorite group or singer? How old were you, and what was important to you about this music? How has the way you listen to music changed in the past five years? For more questions to help you think through the role of music in our lives, see “Questioning the Media” in the Chapter Review.

“If people knew what this stuff was about, we’d probably all get arrested.”

BOB DYLAN, 1966,
TALKING ABOUT ROCK
AND ROLL

Past-Present-Future: Sound Recording

For about half a century starting in the 1950s, the economics of the sound recording industry were pretty simple. Retailers, the record label, the artists, and the songwriters would each get their share of revenue (and radio stations got free content).

Then, in 1999, the music industry was completely caught off guard by the introduction of Napster, the music file-sharing service. After years of panicked lawsuits over file sharing, Apple convinced the industry to go where the customers had already moved in 2003, and iTunes was

born. Today, fans listen to music in any number of ways—downloads, music videos, and online streaming services.

The sound recording industry was the first of the mass media industries to see its business upended by digital culture. Now it is slowly figuring out how to monetize and make its business profitable again. Digital downloads have surpassed CDs as the main source of income, and the proliferation of other distribution models—ringtones, subscription services, video sites, and even radio (the recording industry would now like to charge radio for playing songs)—means that the music industry will never be as uncomplicated again. Music fans will largely decide how they like to consume music, and the industry will have to follow and figure out how to set pricing for new avenues like streaming services.

The Development of Sound Recording



New mass media have often been defined in terms of the communication technologies that preceded them. For example, movies were initially called *motion pictures*, a term that derived from photography; radio was referred to as *wireless telegraphy*, referring back to telegraphs; and television was often called *picture radio*. Likewise, sound recording instruments were initially described as talking machines and later as phonographs, indicating the existing innovations, the *telephone* and the *telegraph*. This early blending of technology foreshadowed our contemporary era, in which media as diverse as newspapers and movies converge on the Internet. Long before the Internet, however, the first major media convergence involved the relationship between the sound recording and radio industries.

From Cylinders to Disks: Sound Recording Becomes a Mass Medium

In the 1850s, the French printer Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville conducted the first experiments with sound recording. Using a hog's hair bristle as a needle, he tied one end to a thin membrane stretched over the narrow part of a funnel. When the inventor spoke into the funnel, the membrane vibrated and the free end of the bristle made grooves on a revolving cylinder coated with a thick liquid called *lamp black*. De Martinville noticed that different sounds made different trails in the lamp black, but he could not figure out how to play back the sound. However, his experiments did usher in the *development stage* of sound recording as a mass medium. In 2008, audio researchers using high-resolution scans of the recordings and a digital stylus were able to finally play back some of de Martinville's recordings for the first time.⁴

THOMAS EDISON

In addition to the phonograph, Edison (1847–1931) ran an industrial research lab that is credited with inventing the motion picture camera and the first commercially successful lightbulb, and a system for distributing electricity.

Sound Recording and Popular Music

de Martinville

The first experiments with sound are conducted in the 1850s using a hog's hair bristle as a needle; de Martinville can record sound, but he can't play it back (p. 122).

Flat Disk

Berliner invents the flat disk in 1887 and develops the gramophone to play it. The disks are easily mass-produced, a labeling system is introduced, and sound recording becomes a mass medium (p. 123).



Radio Threatens the Sound Recording Industry

By 1925, "free" music can be heard over the airwaves (p. 126).

Audiotape

Developed in Germany in the early 1940s, audiotape enables multitrack recording. Taping technology comes to the United States after WWII (p. 124).

1850 • 1880 • 1890 • 1900 • 1910 • 1920 • 1930 • 1940

Phonograph

In 1877, Edison figures out how to play back sound, thinking this invention would make a good answering machine (p. 123).



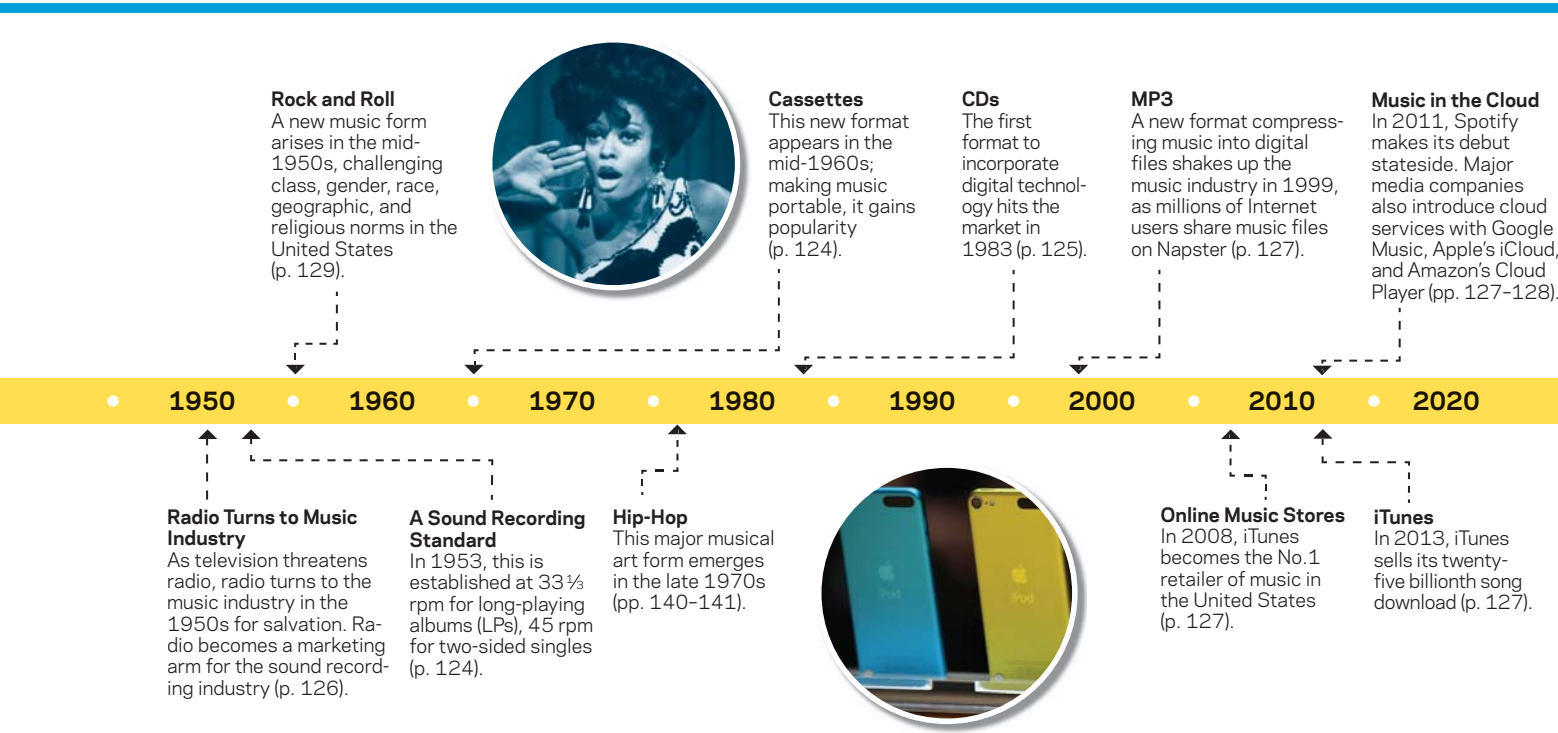
Victrolas

Around 1910, music players enter living rooms as elaborate furniture centerpieces, replacing pianos as musical entertainment (p. 124).

In 1877, Thomas Edison had success playing back sound. He recorded his own voice by using a needle to press his voice's sound waves onto tinfoil wrapped around a metal cylinder about the size of a cardboard toilet-paper roll. After recording his voice, Edison played it back by repositioning the needle to retrace the grooves in the foil. The machine that played these cylinders became known as the *phonograph*, derived from the Greek terms for “sound” and “writing.”

Thomas Edison was more than an inventor—he was also able to envision the practical uses of his inventions and ways to market them. Moving sound recording into its *entrepreneurial stage*, Edison patented his phonograph in 1878 as a kind of answering machine. He thought the phonograph would be used as a “telephone repeater” that would “provide invaluable records, instead of being the recipient of momentary and fleeting communication.”⁵ Edison’s phonograph patent was specifically for a device that recorded and played back foil cylinders. Because of this limitation, in 1886 Chichester Bell (cousin of telephone inventor Alexander Graham Bell) and Charles Sumner Tainter were able to further sound recording by patenting an improvement on the phonograph. Their sound recording device, known as the *graphophone*, played back more durable wax cylinders.⁶ Both Edison’s phonograph and Bell and Tainter’s graphophone had only marginal success as voice-recording office machines. Eventually, both sets of inventors began to produce cylinders with prerecorded music, which proved to be more popular but difficult to mass-produce and not very durable for repeated plays.

Using ideas from Edison, Bell, and Tainter, Emile Berliner, a German engineer who had immigrated to America, developed a better machine that played round, flat disks, or records. Made of zinc and coated with beeswax, these records played on a turntable, which Berliner called a *gramophone* and patented in 1887. Berliner also developed a technique that enabled him to mass-produce his round records, bringing sound recording into its *mass medium stage*. Previously, using Edison’s cylinder, performers had to play or sing into the speaker for each separate recording. Berliner’s technique featured a master recording from which copies could be easily duplicated in mass quantities. In addition, Berliner’s records could be stamped with labels, allowing the music to be differentiated by title, performer, and songwriter. This led to the development of a “star system,” because fans could identify and choose their favorite sounds and artists.



By the early 1900s, record-playing phonographs were widely available for home use. In 1906, the Victor Talking Machine Company placed the hardware, or “guts,” of the record player inside a piece of furniture. These early record players, known as Victrolas, were mechanical and had to be primed with a crank handle. The introduction of electric record players, first available in 1925, gradually replaced Victrolas as more homes were wired for electricity; this led to the gramophone becoming an essential appliance in most American homes.

The appeal of recorded music was limited at first because of sound quality. While the original wax records were replaced by shellac discs, shellac records were also very fragile and didn’t improve the sound quality much. By the 1930s, in part because of the advent of radio and in part because of the Great Depression, record and phonograph sales declined dramatically. However, in the early 1940s shellac was needed for World War II munitions production, so the record industry turned to manufacturing polyvinyl plastic records instead. The vinyl recordings turned out to be more durable than shellac records and less noisy, paving the way for a renewed consumer desire to buy recorded music.

In 1948, CBS Records introduced the 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ -rpm (revolutions-per-minute) *long-playing record* (LP), with about twenty minutes of music on each side of the record, creating a market for multisonic albums and classical music. This was an improvement over the three to four minutes of music contained on the existing 78-rpm records. The next year, RCA developed a competing 45-rpm record that featured a quarter-size hole (best for jukeboxes) and invigorated the sales of songs heard on jukeboxes throughout the country. Unfortunately, the two new record standards were not technically compatible, meaning they could not be played on each other’s machines. A five-year marketing battle ensued, similar to the Macintosh vs. Windows battle over computer-operating-system standards in the 1980s and 1990s or the mid-2000s battle between Blu-ray and HD DVD. In 1953, CBS and RCA compromised. The LP became the standard for long-playing albums, the 45 became the standard for singles, and record players were designed to accommodate 45s, LPs, and, for a while, 78s.

From Phonographs to CDs: Analog Goes Digital

The invention of the phonograph and the record were the key sound recording advancements until the advent of magnetic **audiotape** and tape players in the 1940s. Magnetic tape sound recording was first developed as early as 1929 and further refined in the 1930s, but it didn’t catch on initially because the first machines were bulky reel-to-reel devices, the amount of tape required to make a recording was unwieldy, and the tape itself broke or damaged easily. However, owing largely to improvements by German engineers who developed plastic magnetic tape during World War II, audiotape eventually found its place.

Audiotape’s lightweight magnetized strands finally made possible sound editing and multiple-track mixing, in which instrumentals or vocals could be recorded at one location and later mixed onto a master recording in another studio. This led to a vast improvement of studio recordings and subsequent increases in sales, although the recordings continued to be sold primarily in vinyl format rather than on reel-to-reel tape. By the mid-1960s, engineers had placed miniaturized reel-to-reel audiotape inside small plastic *cassettes* and had developed portable cassette players, permitting listeners to bring recorded music anywhere and creating a market for prerecorded cassettes. Audiotape also permitted “home dubbing”: Consumers could copy their favorite records onto tape or record songs from the radio. This practice denied sales to the recording industry, resulting in a drop in record sales, the doubling of blank audiotape sales during a period in the 1970s, and the later rise of the Sony Walkman, a portable cassette player that foreshadowed the release of the iPod two decades later.

Some thought the portability, superior sound, and recording capabilities of audiotape would mean the demise of records. Although records had retained essentially the same format since the advent of vinyl, the popularity of records continued, in part due to the improved

sound fidelity that came with stereophonic sound. Invented in 1931 by engineer Alan Blumlein, but not put to commercial use until 1958, **stereo** permitted the recording of two separate channels, or tracks, of sound. Recording-studio engineers, using audiotape, could now record many instrumental or vocal tracks, which they “mixed down” to two stereo tracks. When played back through two loudspeakers, stereo creates a more natural sound distribution. By 1971, stereo sound had been advanced into *quadrophonic*, or four-track, sound, but that never caught on commercially.

The biggest recording advancement came in the 1970s, when electrical engineer Thomas Stockham made the first digital audio recordings on standard computer equipment. Although the digital recorder was invented in 1967, Stockham was the first to put it to practical use. In contrast to **analog recording**, which captures the fluctuations of sound waves and stores those signals in a record’s grooves or a tape’s continuous stream of magnetized particles, **digital recording** translates sound waves into binary on-off pulses and stores that information as numerical code. When a digital recording is played back, a microprocessor translates these numerical codes back into sounds and sends them to loudspeakers. By the late 1970s, Sony and Philips were jointly working on a way to design a digitally recorded disc and player to take advantage of this new technology, which could be produced at a lower cost than either vinyl records or audiocassettes. As a result of their efforts, digitally recorded **compact discs (CDs)** hit the market in 1983.

By 1987, CD sales were double the amount of LP record album sales (see Figure 4.1). By 2000, CDs rendered records and audiocassettes nearly obsolete, except for DJs and record enthusiasts who continued to play and collect vinyl LPs. In an effort to create new product lines and maintain consumer sales, the music industry promoted two advanced digital disc formats in the late 1990s, which it hoped would eventually replace standard CDs. However, the introduction of these formats was ill-timed for the industry, because the biggest development in music formatting was already on the horizon—the MP3.

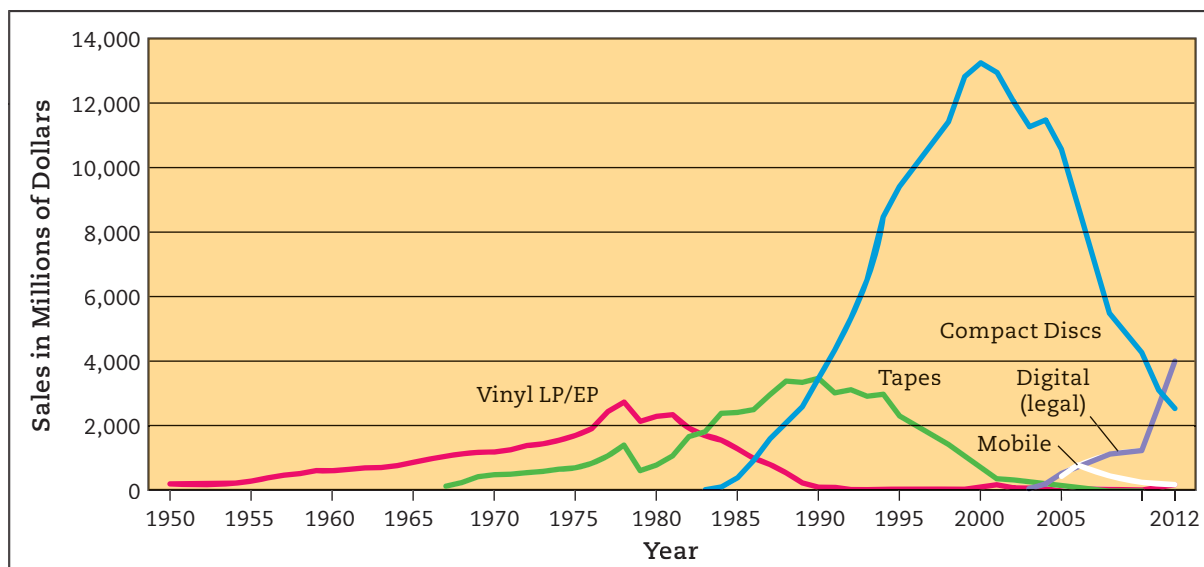
The Rocky Relationship between Records and Radio

The recording industry and radio have always been closely linked. Although they work almost in unison now, in the beginning they had a tumultuous relationship. Radio’s very existence sparked the first battle. By 1915, the phonograph had become a popular form of

FIGURE 4.1
ANNUAL VINYL, TAPE,
CD, MOBILE, AND DIGITAL
SALES

Source: Recording Industry Association of America, 2012 year-end statistics.

Note: “Digital” includes singles, albums, music videos, and kiosk sales. Cassette tapes fell under \$1 million in sales in 2008.



entertainment. The recording industry sold thirty million records that year, and by the end of the decade sales more than tripled each year. In 1924, though, record sales dropped to only half of what they had been the previous year. Why? Because radio had arrived as a competing mass medium, providing free entertainment over the airwaves, independent of the recording industry.

The battle heated up when, to the alarm of the recording industry, radio stations began broadcasting recorded music without compensating the music industry. The American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), founded in 1914 to collect copyright fees for music publishers and writers, charged that radio was contributing to plummeting sales of records and sheet music. By 1925, ASCAP established music rights fees for radio, charging stations between \$250 and \$2,500 a week to play recorded music—and causing many stations to leave the air.

But other stations countered by establishing their own live, in-house orchestras, disseminating “free” music to listeners. This time, the recording industry could do nothing, as original radio music did not infringe on any copyrights. Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, record and phonograph sales continued to fall, although the recording industry got a small boost when Prohibition ended in 1933 and record-playing jukeboxes became the standard musical entertainment in neighborhood taverns.

The recording and radio industries only began to cooperate with each other after television became popular in the early 1950s. Television pilfered radio’s variety shows, crime dramas, and comedy programs and, along with those formats, much of its advertising revenue and audience. Seeking to reinvent itself, radio turned to the record industry, and this time both industries greatly benefited from radio’s new “hit songs” format. The alliance between the recording industry and radio was aided enormously by rock and roll music, which was just emerging in the 1950s. Rock created an enduring consumer youth market for sound recordings and provided much-needed new content for radio precisely when television made it seem like an obsolete medium.

After the digital turn, that mutually beneficial arrangement between the recording and radio industries began to fray. While Internet streaming radio stations were being required to pay royalties to music companies when they played their songs, radio stations still got to play music royalty-free over the air. In 2012, Clear Channel, the largest radio station chain in the United States and one of the largest music streaming companies, with more than a thousand live stations on iHeartRadio.com, was the first company to strike a new deal with the recording industry. Clear Channel pledged to pay royalties to Big Machine Label Group—one of the country’s largest independent labels—for broadcasting the songs of its artists (including Taylor Swift, Tim McGraw, and The Band Perry) in exchange for a limit on royalties it must pay for streaming those artists’ music. With the agreement, Big Machine Label Group gained a new source of royalty income, and Clear Channel crafted a more stable future for its growing digital streaming operations.

Convergence: Sound Recording in the Internet Age

Music, perhaps more so than any other mass medium, is bound up in the social fabric of our lives. Ever since the introduction of the tape recorder and the heyday of homemade mixtapes, music has been something that we have shared eagerly with friends.

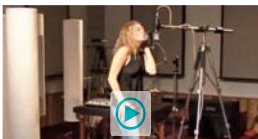
It is not surprising then that the Internet, a mass medium that links individuals and communities together like no other medium, became a hub for sharing music. In fact, the reason college student Shawn Fanning said he developed the groundbreaking file-sharing site Napster in 1999 was “to build communities around different types of music.”⁷

Music’s convergence with radio saved the radio industry in the 1950s. But music’s convergence with the Internet began to unravel the music industry in the 2000s. The changes in the music industry were set in motion about two decades ago with the proliferation of Internet use and the development of a new digital file format.

“Music should never be harmless.”

ROBBIE ROBERTSON,
THE BAND

VideoCentral 
Mass Communication
bedfordstmartins.com
/mediaculture



Recording Music Today
Composer Scott Dugdale discusses technological innovations in music recording.
Discussion: What about the way the video showed a song being produced surprised you the most, and why?

MP3s and File Sharing

The **MP3** file format, developed in 1992, enables digital recordings to be compressed into smaller, more manageable files. With the increasing popularity of the Internet in the mid-1990s, computer users began swapping MP3 music files online because they could be uploaded or downloaded in a fraction of the time it took to exchange noncompressed music and because they used less memory.

By 1999, the year Napster's infamous free file-sharing service brought the MP3 format to popular attention, music files were widely available on the Internet—some for sale, some legally available for free downloading, and many traded in violation of copyright laws. Despite the higher quality of industry-manufactured CDs, music fans enjoyed the convenience of downloading and burning MP3 files to CD. Some listeners skipped CDs altogether, storing their music on hard drives and essentially using their computers as stereo systems. Losing countless music sales to illegal downloading, the music industry fought the proliferation of the MP3 format with an array of lawsuits (aimed at file-sharing companies and at individual downloaders), but the popularity of MP3s continued to increase.

In 2001, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the music industry and against Napster, declaring free music file-swapping illegal and in violation of music copyrights held by recording labels and artists. It was relatively easy for the music industry to shut down Napster (which later relaunched as a legal service), because it required users to log into a centralized system. However, the music industry's elimination of illegal file-sharing was not complete, as decentralized *peer-to-peer* (P2P) systems, such as Grokster, LimeWire, Morpheus, Kazaa, eDonkey, eMule, and BitTorrent, once again enabled online free music file-sharing.

The recording industry fought back with thousands of lawsuits, many of them successful. In 2005, P2P service Grokster shut down after it was fined \$50 million by U.S. federal courts and, in upholding the lower court rulings, the Supreme Court reaffirmed that the music industry could pursue legal action against any P2P service that encouraged its users to illegally share music or other media. By 2010, eDonkey, Morpheus, and LimeWire had been shut down, while Kazaa settled a lawsuit with the music industry and became a legal service. By 2011, several major Internet service providers, including AT&T, Cablevision, Comcast, Time Warner Cable, and Verizon, agreed to help the music industry identify customers who may be illegally downloading music and try to prevent them from doing so by sending them “copyright alert” warning letters, redirecting them to Web pages about digital piracy, and ultimately slowing download speeds, or closing their broadband accounts.

As it cracked down on digital theft, the music industry also realized that it would have to somehow adapt its business to the digital format and embraced services like iTunes (launched by Apple in 2003, to accompany the iPod), which has become the model for legal online distribution. In 2008, iTunes became the top music retailer in the United States, surpassing Walmart, and by 2013 iTunes had sold more than twenty-five billion songs. Even with the success of Apple's iTunes and other online music stores, illegal music file-sharing still accounts for four out of five music downloads in the United States.⁸

Music in the Stream, Music in the Cloud

If the history of recorded music tells us anything, it's that over time tastes change and formats change. While artists take care of the musical possibilities, technology companies are developing formats for the future. One such format is “music in the cloud,” which eliminates the physical ownership of music entirely. This format first became

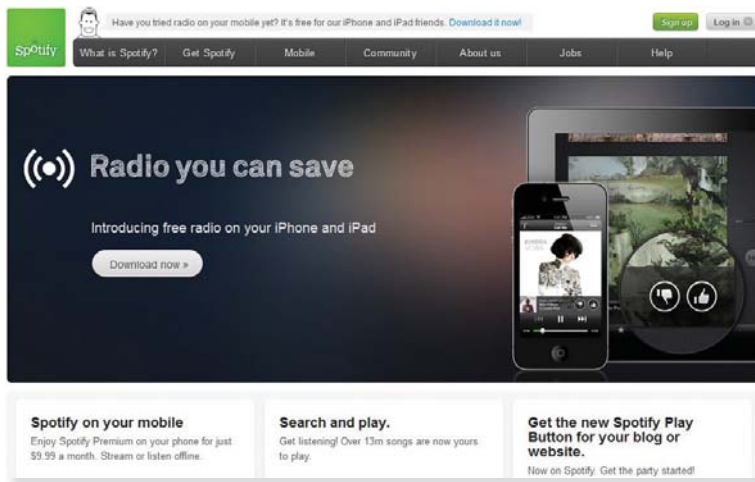
“Today's Internet landscape—with millions of consumers downloading songs from the iTunes Music Store, watching videos on YouTube or Hulu and networking on social media sites like Facebook—can be traced back to the day in early June of 1999 when [eighteen-year-old inventor Shawn] Fanning made Napster available for wider distribution.”

SAN FRANCISCO
CHRONICLE, 2009

APPLE'S IPOD, the leading portable music and video player, began a revolution in digital music.

▼





popular with streaming radio services like Pandora, where users can create personalized Internet music radio channels for free (Pandora is financed by ads), although they can't select individual songs. Then came subscription music services, including MOG, Rhapsody, Rdio, Audiogalaxy, AudioBox, and the popular European service co-owned by major music labels, Spotify, which made its debut in the United States in 2011. With these services, listeners can pay a monthly subscription of \$5 to \$10 and instantly play millions of songs on demand via the Internet. Three major media companies also jumped on the “cloud-based music” bandwagon in 2011. Although users still need to purchase copies of individual songs, Amazon's Cloud Player, Google Music, and

Apple's iCloud provide users with a “storage locker” on the Web for their music, so they can access it almost anywhere, on almost any Internet-connected device.

SPOTIFY became popular in Europe before the streaming service made its U.S. debut in 2011. It has a vast catalog of music, though artists must rack up a lot of plays to see much money. A member of the band Grizzly Bear reported on Twitter that about 10,000 plays nets them, “approximately ten dollars.”

U.S. Popular Music and the Formation of Rock

Popular or **pop music** is music that appeals either to a wide cross section of the public or to sizable subdivisions within the larger public based on age, region, or ethnic background (e.g., teenagers, southerners, Mexican Americans). U.S. pop music today encompasses styles as diverse as blues, country, Tejano, salsa, jazz, rock, reggae, punk, hip-hop, and dance. The word *pop* has also been used to distinguish popular music from classical music, which is written primarily for ballet, opera, ensemble, or symphony. As various subcultures have intersected, U.S. popular music has developed organically, constantly creating new forms and reinvigorating older musical styles.

The Rise of Pop Music

Although it is commonly assumed that pop music developed simultaneously with the phonograph and radio, it actually existed prior to these media. In the late nineteenth century, the sale of sheet music for piano and other instruments sprang from a section of Broadway in Manhattan known as Tin Pan Alley, a derisive term used to describe the way that these quickly produced tunes supposedly sounded like cheap pans clanging together. Tin Pan Alley's tradition of song publishing began in the late 1880s with music like the marches of John Philip Sousa and the ragtime piano pieces of Scott Joplin. It continued through the first half of the twentieth century with the show tunes and vocal ballads of Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and Cole Porter, and into the 1950s and 1960s with such rock-and-roll writing teams as Jerry Leiber-Mike Stoller and Carole King-Gerry Goffin.

At the turn of the twentieth century, with the newfound ability of song publishers to mass-produce sheet music for a growing middle class, popular songs moved from being a novelty to being a major business enterprise. With the emergence of the phonograph, song publishers also discovered that recorded tunes boosted interest in and sales of sheet music. Songwriting and Tin Pan Alley played a key role in transforming popular music into a mass medium.



SCOTT JOPLIN (1868-1917) published more than fifty compositions during his life, including “Maple Leaf Rag”—arguably his most famous piece.

As sheet music grew in popularity, **jazz** developed in New Orleans. An improvisational and mostly instrumental musical form, jazz absorbed and integrated a diverse body of musical styles, including African rhythms, blues, and gospel. Jazz influenced many bandleaders throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Groups led by Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and Glenn Miller were among the most popular of the “swing” jazz bands, whose rhythmic music also dominated radio, recording, and dance halls in their day.

The first pop vocalists of the twentieth century were products of the vaudeville circuit, which radio, movies, and the Depression would bring to an end in the 1930s. In the 1920s, Eddie Cantor, Belle Baker, Sophie Tucker, and Al Jolson were all extremely popular. By the 1930s, Rudy Vallée and Bing Crosby had established themselves as the first “crooners,” or singers of pop standards. Bing Crosby also popularized Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas,” one of the most covered songs in recording history. (A song recorded or performed by another artist is known as **cover music**.) Meanwhile, the Andrews Sisters’ boogie-woogie style helped them sell more than sixty million records in the late 1930s and 1940s. In one of the first mutually beneficial alliances between sound recording and radio, many early pop vocalists had their own network of regional radio programs, which vastly increased their exposure.

Frank Sinatra arrived in the 1940s, and his romantic ballads foreshadowed the teen love songs of rock and roll’s early years. Nicknamed “The Voice” early in his career, Sinatra, like Crosby, parlayed his music and radio exposure into movie stardom. (Both singers made more than fifty films apiece.) Helped by radio, pop vocalists like Sinatra were among the first vocalists to become popular with a large national teen audience. Their record sales helped stabilize the industry, and in the early 1940s Sinatra’s concerts caused the kind of audience riots that would later characterize rock-and-roll performances.

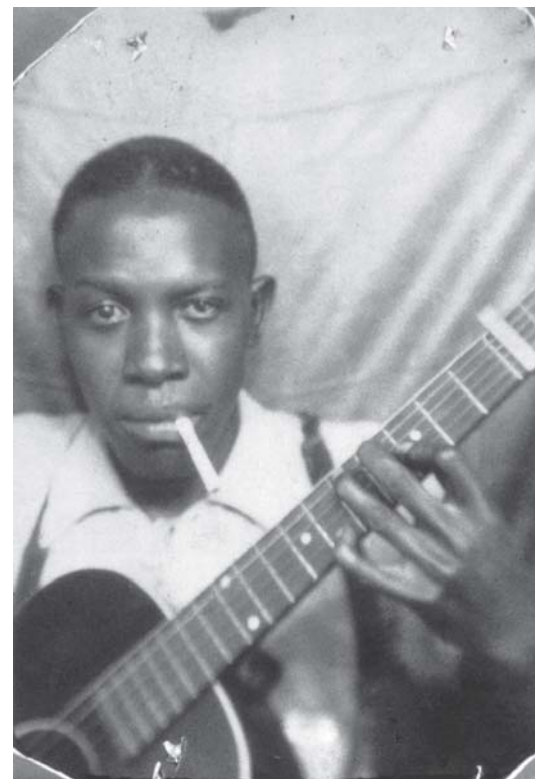
Rock and Roll Is Here to Stay

The cultural storm called **rock and roll** hit in the mid-1950s. As with the term *jazz*, *rock and roll* was a blues slang term for “sex,” lending it instant controversy. Early rock and roll was considered the first “integrationist music,” merging the black sounds of rhythm and blues, gospel, and Robert Johnson’s screeching blues guitar with the white influences of country, folk, and pop vocals.⁹ From a cultural perspective, only a few musical forms have ever sprung from such a diverse set of influences, and no new style of music has ever had such a widespread impact on so many different cultures as rock and roll. From an economic perspective, rock and roll was the first musical form to simultaneously transform the structure of sound recording and radio. Rock’s development set the stage for how music is produced, distributed, and performed today. Many social, cultural, economic, and political factors leading up to the 1950s contributed to the growth of rock and roll, including black migration, the growth of youth culture, and the beginnings of racial integration.

The migration of southern blacks to northern cities in search of better jobs during the first half of the twentieth century had helped spread different popular music styles. In particular, **blues** music, the foundation of rock and roll, came to the North. Influenced by African American spirituals, ballads, and work songs from the rural South, blues music was exemplified in the work of Robert Johnson, Ma Rainey, Son House, Bessie Smith, Charley Patton, and others. The introduction in the 1930s of the electric guitar—a major contribution to rock music—gave southern blues its urban style, popularized in the work of Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson, B.B. King, and Buddy Guy.¹⁰

“Frank Sinatra was categorized in 1943 as ‘the glorification of ignorance and musical illiteracy.’”

DICK CLARK, *THE FIRST 25 YEARS OF ROCK & ROLL*



ROBERT JOHNSON (1911–1938), who ranks among the most influential and innovative American guitarists, played the Mississippi delta blues and was a major influence on early rock and rollers, especially the Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton. His intense slide-guitar and finger-style playing also inspired generations of blues artists, including Muddy Waters, Howlin’ Wolf, Bonnie Raitt, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. To get a sense of his style, visit The Robert Johnson Notebooks, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MUSIC/rjhome.html>.



BESSIE SMITH (1895–1937) is considered the best female blues singer of the 1920s and 1930s. Mentored by the famous Ma Rainey, Smith had many hits, including “Down Hearted Blues” and “Gulf Coast Blues.” She also appeared in the 1929 film *St. Louis Blues*.

During this time, blues-based urban black music began to be marketed under the name **rhythm and blues**, or **R&B**. Featuring “huge rhythm units smashing away behind screaming blues singers,” R&B appealed to young listeners fascinated by the explicit (and forbidden) sexual lyrics in songs like “Annie Had a Baby,” “Sexy Ways,” and “Wild Wild Young Men.”¹¹ Although it was banned on some stations, by 1953 R&B continued to gain airtime. In those days, black and white musical forms were segregated: Trade magazines tracked R&B record sales on “race” charts, which were kept separate from white record sales tracked on “pop” charts.

Another reason for the growth of rock and roll can be found in the repressive and uneasy atmosphere of the 1950s. To cope with the threat of the atomic bomb, the Cold War, and communist witch-hunts, young people sought escape from the menacing world created by adults. Teens have always sought out music that has a beat—music they can dance to. In Europe in the late 1700s, they popularized the waltz; and in America during the 1890s, they danced the cakewalk to music that inspired marches and ragtime. The trend continued during the 1920s with the Charleston, in the 1930s and 1940s with the jazz swing bands and the jitterbug, in the 1970s with disco, and in the 1980s and 1990s with hip-hop. Each of these twentieth-century musical forms began as dance and party music before its growing popularity eventually energized both record sales and radio formats.

Perhaps the most significant factor in the growth of rock and roll was the beginning of the integration of white and black cultures. In addition to increased exposure of black literature, art, and music, several key historical events in the 1950s broke down the borders between black and white cultures. In 1948, President Truman had signed an executive order integrating the armed forces, bringing young men from very different ethnic and economic backgrounds together at the time of the Korean War. Even more significant was the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. With this ruling, “separate but equal” laws, which had kept white and black schools, hotels, restaurants, rest rooms, and drinking fountains segregated for decades, were declared unconstitutional. A cultural reflection of the times, rock and roll would burst forth from the midst of these social and political tensions.

Rock Muddies the Waters

In the 1950s, legal integration accompanied a cultural shift, and the music industry’s race and pop charts blurred. White deejay Alan Freed had been playing black music for his young audiences in Cleveland and New York since the early 1950s, and such white performers as Johnnie Ray and Bill Haley had crossed over to the race charts to score R&B hits. Meanwhile, black artists like Chuck Berry were performing country songs, and for a time Ray Charles even played in an otherwise all-white country band. Although continuing the work of breaking down racial borders was one of rock and roll’s most important contributions, it also blurred other long-standing distinctions between high and low culture, masculinity and femininity, the country and the city, the North and the South, and the sacred and the secular.

High and Low Culture

In 1956, Chuck Berry’s “Roll Over Beethoven” merged rock and roll, considered low culture by many, with high culture, thus forever blurring the traditional boundary between these cultural forms with lyrics like: “You know my temperature’s risin’ / the jukebox is blowin’ a fuse . . . / Roll over Beethoven / and tell Tchaikovsky the news.” Although such early rock-and-roll lyrics seem tame by today’s standards, at the time they sounded like sacrilege. Rock and rollers also challenged music decorum and the rules governing how musicians should behave or misbehave: Berry’s “duck walk” across the stage, Elvis Presley’s pegged pants and gyrating hips, and Bo Diddley’s use of the guitar as a phallic symbol were an affront to the norms of well-behaved,

“The songs of Muddy Waters impelled me to deliver the down-home blues in the language they came from, Negro dialect. When I played hillbilly songs, I stressed my diction so that it was harder and whiter. All in all it was my intention to hold both the black and white clientele.”

CHUCK BERRY, *THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY*, 1987

culturally elite audiences. Such antics would be imitated endlessly throughout rock's history.

The blurring of cultures works both ways. Since the advent of rock and roll, musicians performing in traditionally high culture genres such as classical have even adopted some of rock and roll's ideas in an effort to boost sales and popularity. Some virtuosos like violinist Joshua Bell and cellist Matt Haimovitz (who does his own version of Jimi Hendrix's famous improvisation of the national anthem) have performed in jeans and in untraditional venues like bars and subway stations to reinterpret the presentation of classical music.

Masculinity and Femininity

Rock and roll was also the first popular music genre to overtly confuse issues of sexual identity and orientation. Although early rock and roll largely attracted males as performers, the most fascinating feature of Elvis Presley, according to the Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger, was his androgynous appearance.¹² During this early period, though, the most sexually outrageous rock-and-roll performer was Little Richard (Penniman).

Wearing a pompadour hairdo and assaulting his Steinway piano, Little Richard was considered rock and roll's first drag queen, blurring the boundary between masculinity and femininity. Little Richard has said that given the reality of American racism, he blurred gender and sexuality lines because he feared the consequences of becoming a sex symbol for white girls: "I decided that my image should be crazy and way out so that adults would think I was harmless. I'd appear in one show dressed as the Queen of England and in the next as the pope."¹³ Little Richard's playful blurring of gender identity and sexual orientation paved the way for performers like David Bowie, Elton John, Boy George, Annie Lennox, Prince, Grace Jones, Marilyn Manson, Lady Gaga, and Adam Lambert.

The Country and the City

Rock and roll also blurred geographic borders between country and city, between the black urban rhythms of Memphis and the white country & western music of Nashville. Early white rockers such as Buddy Holly and Carl Perkins combined country or hillbilly music, southern gospel, and Mississippi delta blues to create a sound called **rockabilly**. Conversely, rhythm and blues spilled into rock and roll. The urban R&B influences on early rock came from Fats Domino ("Blueberry Hill"), Willie Mae "Big Mama" Thornton ("Hound Dog"), and Big Joe Turner ("Shake, Rattle, and Roll"). Many of these songs, first popular on R&B labels, crossed over to the pop charts during the mid- to late 1950s (although many were performed by more widely known white artists). Chuck Berry borrowed from white country & western music (an old country song called "Ida Red") and combined it with R&B to write "Maybellene." His first hit, the song was No. 1 on the R&B chart in July 1955 and crossed over to the pop charts the next month.

Although rock lyrics in the 1950s may not have been especially provocative or overtly political, soaring record sales and the crossover appeal of the music itself represented an enormous threat to long-standing racial and class boundaries. In 1956, the secretary of the North Alabama White Citizens Council bluntly spelled out the racism and white fear concerning the new blending of urban/black and rural/white culture: "Rock and roll is a means of pulling the white man down to the level of the Negro. It is part of a plot to undermine the morals of the youth of our nation."¹⁴ These days, distinctions between traditionally rural music and urban music continue to blur, with older hybrids such as country rock (think of the Eagles) and newer forms like "alternative country," performed by artists like Ryan Adams, Steve Earle, Wilco, and Kings of Leon.



ROCK-AND-ROLL PIONEER

A major influence on early rock and roll, Chuck Berry, born in 1926, scored major hits between 1955 and 1958, writing "Maybellene," "Roll Over Beethoven," "School Day," "Sweet Little Sixteen," and "Johnny B. Goode." At the time, he was criticized by some black artists for sounding white and by conservative critics for his popularity among white teenagers. Today, young guitar players routinely imitate his style.



KATY PERRY

Many of today's biggest pop music stars show off not just catchy radio-ready singles, but eye-grabbing fashion, memorable music videos, and multimillion-dollar live shows. Perry's 3-D concert movie, *Part of Me*, was released in theaters in 2012; her album *Prism* followed in 2013.

"[Elvis Presley's] kind of music is deplorable, a rancid smelling aphrodisiac."

FRANK SINATRA, 1956

"There have been many accolades uttered about [Presley's] talent and performances through the years, all of which I agree with wholeheartedly."

FRANK SINATRA, 1977

The North and the South

Not only did rock and roll muddy the urban and rural terrain, it also combined northern and southern influences. In fact, with so much blues, R&B, and rock and roll rising from the South in the 1950s, this region regained some of its cultural flavor, which (along with a sizable portion of the population) had migrated to the North after the Civil War and during the early twentieth century. Meanwhile, musicians and audiences in the North had absorbed blues music as their own, eliminating the understanding of blues as specifically a southern style. Like the many white teens today who are fascinated by hip-hop, Carl Perkins, Elvis Presley, and Buddy Holly—all from the rural South—were fascinated with and influenced by the black urban styles they had heard on the radio or seen in nightclubs. These artists in turn brought southern culture to northern listeners.

But the key to record sales and the spread of rock and roll, according to famed record producer Sam Phillips of Sun Records, was to find a white man who sounded black. Phillips found that man in Elvis Presley. Commenting on Presley's cultural importance, one critic wrote: "White rockabillys like Elvis took poor white southern mannerisms of speech and behavior deeper into mainstream culture than they had ever been taken."¹⁵

The Sacred and the Secular

Although many mainstream adults in the 1950s complained that rock and roll's sexuality and questioning of moral norms constituted an offense against God, in fact many early rock figures had close ties to religion. Jerry Lee Lewis attended a Bible institute in Texas (although he was eventually thrown out); Ray Charles converted an old gospel tune he had first heard in church as a youth into "I Got a Woman," one of his signature songs; and many other artists transformed gospel songs into rock and roll.

Still, many people did not appreciate the blurring of boundaries between the sacred and the secular. In the late 1950s, public outrage over rock and roll was so great that even Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis, both sons of southern preachers, became convinced that they were playing the "devil's music." By 1959, Little Richard had left rock and roll to become a minister. Lewis had to be coerced into recording "Great Balls of Fire," a song by Otis Blackwell that turned an apocalyptic biblical phrase into a highly charged sexual teen love song that was banned by many radio stations, but nevertheless climbed to No. 2 on the pop charts in 1957. Throughout the rock-and-roll era to today, the boundaries between sacred and secular music and religious and secular concerns continue to blur, with some churches using rock and roll to appeal to youth, and some Christian-themed rock groups recording music as seemingly incongruous as heavy metal.

Battles in Rock and Roll

The blurring of racial lines and the breakdown of other conventional boundaries meant that performers and producers were forced to play a tricky game to get rock and roll accepted by the masses. Two prominent white disc jockeys used different methods. Cleveland deejay Alan Freed, credited with popularizing the term *rock and roll*, played original R&B recordings from the race charts and black versions of early rock and roll on his program. In contrast, Philadelphia deejay Dick Clark believed that making black music acceptable to white audiences required cover versions by white artists. By the mid-1950s, rock and roll was gaining acceptance with the masses, but rock-and-roll artists and promoters still faced further obstacles: Black artists found that their music was often undermined by white cover versions; the payola scandals portrayed rock and roll as a corrupt industry; and fears of rock and roll as a contributing factor in juvenile delinquency resulted in censorship.



White Cover Music Undermines Black Artists

By the mid-1960s, black and white artists routinely recorded and performed one another's original tunes. For example, established black R&B artist Otis Redding covered the Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction" and Jimi Hendrix covered Bob Dylan's "All along the Watchtower," while just about every white rock-and-roll band established its career by covering R&B classics. Most notably, the Beatles covered "Twist and Shout" and "Money" and the Rolling Stones—whose name came from a Muddy Waters song—covered numerous Robert Johnson songs and other blues staples.

Although today we take such rerecordings for granted, in the 1950s the covering of black artists' songs by white musicians was almost always an attempt to capitalize on popular songs from the R&B "race" charts and transform them into hits on the white pop charts. Often, white producers would not only give co-writing credit to white performers for the tunes they only covered, but they would also buy the rights to potential hits from black songwriters who seldom saw a penny in royalties or received songwriting credit.

During this period, black R&B artists, working for small record labels, saw many of their popular songs covered by white artists working for major labels. These cover records, boosted by better marketing and ties to white deejays, usually outsold the original black versions. For instance, the 1954 R&B song "Sh-Boom," by the Chords on Atlantic's Cat label, was immediately covered by a white group, the Crew Cuts, for the major Mercury label. Record sales declined for the Chords, although jukebox and R&B radio play remained strong for their original version. By 1955, R&B hits regularly crossed over to the pop charts, but inevitably the cover music versions were more successful. Pat Boone's cover of Fats Domino's "Ain't That a Shame" went to No. 1 and stayed on the Top 40's pop chart for twenty weeks, whereas Domino's original made it only to No. 10. During this time, Pat Boone ranked as the king of cover music, with thirty-eight Top 40 songs between 1955 and 1962. His records were second in sales only to Elvis Presley's. Slowly, however, the cover situation changed. After watching Boone outsell his song "Tutti-Frutti" in 1956, Little Richard wrote "Long Tall Sally," which included lyrics written and delivered in such a way that he believed Boone would not be able to adequately replicate them. "Long Tall Sally" went to No. 6 for Little Richard and charted for twelve weeks; Boone's version got to No. 8 and stayed there for nine weeks.

ELVIS PRESLEY AND HIS LEGACY

Elvis Presley remains the most popular solo artist of all time. From 1956 to 1962, he recorded seventeen No. 1 hits, from "Heartbreak Hotel" to "Good Luck Charm." According to Little Richard, Presley's main legacy was that he opened doors for many young performers and made black music popular in mainstream America. Presley's influence continues to be felt today in the music of artists like Bruno Mars.

Overt racism lingered in the music business well into the 1960s. A turning point, however, came in 1962, the last year that Pat Boone, then age twenty-eight, ever had a Top 40 rock-and-roll hit. That year, Ray Charles covered “I Can’t Stop Loving You,” a 1958 country song by the Grand Ole Opry’s Don Gibson. This marked the first time that a black artist, covering a white artist’s song, had notched a No. 1 pop hit. With Charles’s cover, the rock-and-roll merger between gospel and R&B, on one hand, and white country and pop, on the other, was complete. In fact, the relative acceptance of black crossover music provided a more favorable cultural context for the political activism that spurred important Civil Rights legislation in the mid-1960s.

Payola Scandals Tarnish Rock and Roll

The payola scandals of the 1950s were another cloud over rock-and-roll music and its artists. In the music industry, *payola* is the practice of record promoters paying deejays or radio programmers to play particular songs. As recorded rock and roll became central to commercial radio’s success in the 1950s and the demand for airplay grew enormous, independent promoters hired by record labels used payola to pressure deejays into playing songs by the artists they represented.

Although payola was considered a form of bribery, no laws prohibited its practice. However, following closely on the heels of television’s quiz-show scandals (see Chapter 6), congressional hearings on radio payola began in December 1959. The hearings were partly a response to generally fraudulent business practices, but they were also an opportunity to blame deejays and radio for rock and roll’s negative impact on teens by portraying it as a corrupt industry.

The payola scandals threatened, ended, or damaged the careers of a number of rock-and-roll deejays and undermined rock and roll’s credibility for a number of years. In 1959, shortly before the hearings, Chicago deejay Phil Lind decided to clear the air. He broadcast secretly taped discussions in which a representative of a small independent record label acknowledged that it had paid \$22,000 to ensure that a record would get airplay. Lind received calls threatening his life and had to have police protection. At the hearings in 1960, Alan Freed admitted to participating in payola, although he said he did not believe there was anything illegal about such deals, and his career soon ended. Dick Clark, then an influential deejay and the host of TV’s *American Bandstand*, would not admit to participating in payola. But the hearings committee chastised Clark and alleged that some of his complicated business deals were ethically questionable, a censure that hung over him for years. Congress eventually added a law concerning payola to the Federal Communications Act, prescribing a \$10,000 fine and/or a year in jail for each violation (see Chapter 5).

Fears of Corruption Lead to Censorship

Since rock and roll’s inception, one of the uphill battles it faced was the perception that it was a cause of juvenile delinquency, which was statistically on the rise in the 1950s. Looking for an easy culprit rather than considering contributing factors such as neglect, the rising consumer culture, or the growing youth population, many assigned blame to rock and roll. The view that rock and roll corrupted youth was widely accepted by social authorities, and rock-and-roll music was often censored, eventually even by the industry itself.

By late 1959, many key figures in rock and roll had been tamed. Jerry Lee Lewis was exiled from the industry, labeled southern “white trash” for marrying his thirteen-year-old third cousin; Elvis Presley, having already been censored on television, was drafted into the army; Chuck Berry was run out of Mississippi and eventually jailed for gun possession and transporting a minor across state lines; and Little Richard felt forced to tone down his image and left rock and roll to sing gospel music. A tragic accident led to the final taming of rock and roll’s first frontline. In February 1959, Buddy Holly (“Peggy Sue”), Ritchie Valens (“La Bamba”), and the Big Bopper (“Chantilly Lace”) all died in an Iowa plane crash—a tragedy mourned in Don McLean’s 1971 hit “American Pie” as “the day the music died.”

Although rock and roll did not die in the late 1950s, the U.S. recording industry decided that it needed a makeover. To protect the enormous profits the new music had been generating, record companies began to discipline some of rock and roll's rebellious impulses. In the early 1960s, the industry introduced a new generation of clean-cut white singers, like Frankie Avalon, Connie Francis, Ricky Nelson, Lesley Gore, and Fabian. Rock and roll's explosive violations of racial, class, and other boundaries were transformed into simpler generation gap problems, and the music developed a milder reputation.

A Changing Industry: Reformations in Popular Music

As the 1960s began, rock and roll was tamer and “safer,” as reflected in the surf and road music of the Beach Boys and Jan & Dean, but it was also beginning to branch out. For instance, the success of all-female groups, such as the Shangri-Las (“Leader of the Pack”) and the Angels (“My Boyfriend’s Back”), challenged the male-dominated world of early rock and roll. In addition, rock-and-roll music and other popular styles went through cultural reformations that significantly changed the industry, including the international appeal of the “British invasion”; the development of soul and Motown; the political impact of folk-rock; the experimentalism of psychedelic music; the rejection of music’s mainstream by punk, grunge, and alternative rock movements; and the reassertion of black urban style in hip-hop.

The British Are Coming!

Rock recordings today remain among America’s largest economic exports, bringing in billions of dollars a year from abroad. In cultural terms, the global trade of rock and roll is even more evident in the exchanges and melding of rhythms, beats, vocal styles, and musical instruments. The origin of rock’s global impact can be traced to England in the late 1950s, when the young Rolling Stones listened to the blues of Robert Johnson and Muddy Waters, and the young Beatles tried to imitate Chuck Berry and Little Richard.

Until 1964, rock-and-roll recordings had traveled on a one-way ticket to Europe. Even though American artists regularly reached the top of the charts overseas, no British performers had yet appeared on any Top 10 pop lists in the States. This changed almost overnight. In 1964, the Beatles invaded America with their mop haircuts and pop reinterpretations of American blues and rock and roll. Within the next few years, more British bands as diverse as the Kinks, the Rolling Stones, the Zombies, the Animals, Herman’s Hermits, the Who, the Yardbirds, Them, and the Troggs had hit the American Top 40 charts.

With the British invasion, “rock and roll” unofficially became “rock,” sending popular music and the industry in two directions. On the one hand, the Rolling Stones would influence generations of musicians emphasizing gritty, chord-driven, high-volume rock, including bands in the glam rock, hard rock, punk, heavy metal, and grunge genres. On the other hand, the Beatles would influence countless artists interested in a more accessible, melodic, and softer sound, in genres such as pop-rock, power-pop, new wave, and alternative rock. In the end, the British invasion verified what Chuck Berry and Little Richard had already demonstrated—that rock-and-roll performers could write and produce popular songs as well as Tin Pan Alley had. The success of British groups helped change an industry arrangement in which most pop music was produced by songwriting teams hired by major labels and matched with selected performers. Even more

“Hard rock was rock’s blues base electrified and upped in volume . . . heavy metal wanted to be the rock music equivalent of a horror movie—loud, exaggerated, rude, out for thrills only.”

KEN TUCKER,
ROCK OF AGES, 1986



BRITISH ROCK GROUPS

Ed Sullivan, who booked the Beatles several times on his TV variety show in 1964, helped promote their early success. Sullivan, though, reacted differently to the Rolling Stones, who were perceived as the “bad boys” of rock and roll in contrast to the “good” Beatles. The Stones performed black-influenced music without “whitening” the sound and exuded a palpable aura of sexuality, particularly frontman Mick Jagger. Although the Stones appeared on his program as early as 1964 and returned on several occasions, Sullivan remained wary and forced them to change the lyrics of “Let’s Spend the Night Together” to “Let’s Spend Some Time Together” for a 1967 broadcast.

important, the British invasion showed the recording industry how older American musical forms, especially blues and R&B, could be repackaged as rock and exported around the world.

Motor City Music: Detroit Gives America Soul

Ironically, the British invasion, which drew much of its inspiration from black influences, drew many white listeners away from a new generation of black performers. Gradually, however, throughout the 1960s, black singers like James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, Ike and Tina Turner, and Wilson Pickett found large and diverse audiences. Transforming the rhythms and melodies of older R&B, pop, and early rock and roll into what became labeled as **soul**, they countered the British invaders with powerful vocal performances. Mixing gospel and blues with emotion and lyrics drawn from the American black experience, soul contrasted sharply with the emphasis on loud, fast instrumentals and lighter lyrical concerns that characterized much of rock music.¹⁶

The most prominent independent label that nourished soul and black popular music was Motown, started in 1959 by former Detroit autoworker and songwriter Berry Gordy with a \$700 investment and named after Detroit’s “Motor City” nickname. Beginning with Smokey Robinson and the Miracles’ “Shop Around,” which hit No. 2 in 1960, Motown enjoyed a long string of hit records that rivaled the pop success of British bands throughout the decade. Motown’s many successful artists included the Temptations (“My Girl”), Mary Wells (“My Guy”), the Four Tops (“I Can’t Help Myself”), Martha and the Vandellas (“Heat Wave”), Marvin Gaye (“I Heard It through the Grapevine”), and, in the early 1970s, the Jackson 5 (“ABC”). But the label’s most successful group was the Supremes, featuring Diana Ross, who scored twelve No. 1 singles between 1964 and 1969 (“Where Did Our Love Go,” “Stop! In the Name of Love”). The Motown groups had a more stylized, softer sound than the grittier southern soul (later known as funk) of Brown and Pickett.

Folk and Psychedelic Music Reflect the Times

Popular music has always been a product of its time, so the social upheavals of the Civil Rights movement, the women’s movement, the environmental movement, and the Vietnam War naturally brought social concerns into the music of the 1960s and early 1970s. Even Motown



THE SUPREMES

One of the most successful groups in rock-and-roll history, the Supremes started out as the Primettes in Detroit in 1959. They signed with Motown's Tamla label in 1960 and changed their name in 1961. Between 1964 and 1969 they recorded twelve No. 1 hits, including "Where Did Our Love Go," "Baby Love," "Come See about Me," "Stop! In the Name of Love," "I Hear a Symphony," "You Can't Hurry Love," and "Someday We'll Be Together." Lead singer Diana Ross (center) left the group in 1969 for a solo career. The group was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988.

acts sounded edgy, with hits like Edwin Starr's "War" (1970) and Marvin Gaye's "What's Goin' On" (1971). By the late 1960s, the Beatles had transformed themselves from a relatively light-weight pop band to one that spoke for the social and political concerns of their generation, and many other groups followed the same trajectory. (To explore how the times and personal taste influence music choices, see "Media Literacy and the Critical Process: Music Preferences across Generations" on page 138.)

Folk Inspires Protest

The musical genre that most clearly responded to the political happenings of the time was folk music, which had long been the sound of social activism. In its broadest sense, **folk music** in any culture refers to songs performed by untrained musicians and passed down mainly through oral traditions, from the banjo and fiddle tunes of Appalachia to the accordion-led zydeco of Louisiana and the folk-blues of the legendary Lead Belly (Huddie Ledbetter). During the 1930s, folk was defined by the music of Woody Guthrie ("This Land Is Your Land"), who not only brought folk to the city but also was extremely active in social reforms. Groups such as the Weavers, featuring labor activist and songwriter Pete Seeger, carried on Guthrie's legacy and inspired a new generation of singer-songwriters, including Joan Baez; Arlo Guthrie; Peter, Paul, and Mary; Phil Ochs; and—perhaps the most influential—Bob Dylan. Dylan's career as a folk artist began with acoustic performances in New York's Greenwich Village in 1961, and his notoriety was spurred by his measured nonchalance and unique nasal voice. Significantly influenced by the blues, Dylan identified folk as "finger pointin'" music that addressed current social circumstances. At a key moment in popular music's history, Dylan walked onstage at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival fronting a full, electric rock band. He was booed and cursed by traditional "folkies," who saw amplified music as a sellout to the commercial recording industry. However, Dylan's move to rock was aimed at reaching a broader and younger constituency, and in doing so he inspired the formation of **folk-rock** artists like the Byrds, who had a No. 1 hit with a cover of Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man," and led millions to protest during the turbulent 1960s.

Media Literacy and the Critical Process

1 DESCRIPTION. Arrange to interview four to eight friends or relatives of different ages about their musical tastes and influences. Devise questions about what music they listen to and have listened to at different stages of their lives. What music do they buy or collect? What's the first album (or single) they acquired? What's the latest album? What stories or vivid memories do they relate to particular songs or artists? Collect demographic and consumer information: age, gender, occupation, educational background, place of birth, and current place of residence.

2 ANALYSIS. Chart and organize your results. Do you recognize any patterns emerging from the data or stories? What kinds of music did your interview subjects listen to when they were younger? What kinds of music do they listen to now? What formed/influenced their musical interests? If their musical interests changed, what happened? (If they stopped listening to music, note that and find out why.) Do they have any associations between music and their everyday lives? Are these music associations and lifetime

Music Preferences across Generations

We make judgments about music all the time. Older generations don't like some of the music younger people prefer, and young people often dismiss some of the music of previous generations. Even among our peers, we have different tastes in music and often reject certain kinds of music that have become too popular or that don't conform to our own preferences. The following exercise aims to understand musical tastes beyond our own individual choices. Always include yourself in this project.

interactions with songs and artists important to them?

3 INTERPRETATION. Based on what you have discovered and the patterns you have charted, determine what the patterns mean. Does age, gender, geographic location, or education matter in musical tastes? Over time, are the changes in musical tastes and buying habits significant? Why or why not? What kind of music is most important to your subjects? Finally, and most important, why do you think their music preferences developed as they did?

4 EVALUATION. Determine how your interview subjects came to like particular kinds of music. What constitutes "good" and "bad"

music for them? Did their ideas change over time? How? Are they open- or closed-minded about music? How do they form judgments about music? What criteria did your interview subjects offer for making judgments about music? Do you think their criteria are a valid way to judge music?

5 ENGAGEMENT. To expand on your findings, consider the connections of music across generations, geography, and genres. Take a musical artist you like and input the name at www.music-map.com. Use the output of related artists to discover new bands. Input favorite artists for the people you interviewed in Step 1, and share the results with them. Expand your musical tastes.

"Through their raw, nihilistic singles and violent performances, the [Sex Pistols] revolutionized the idea of what rock and roll could be."

STEPHEN THOMAS ERLEWINE,
ALL-MUSIC GUIDE,
1996

Rock Turns Psychedelic

Alcohol and drugs have long been associated with the private lives of blues, jazz, country, and rock musicians. These links, however, became much more public in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when authorities busted members of the Rolling Stones and the Beatles. With the increasing role of drugs in youth culture and the availability of LSD (not illegal until the mid-1960s), more and more rock musicians experimented with and sang about drugs in what were frequently labeled rock's psychedelic years. Many groups and performers of the *psychedelic* era (named for the mind-altering effects of LSD and other drugs) like the Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother and the Holding Company (featuring Janis Joplin), the Jimi Hendrix Experience, the Doors, and the Grateful Dead (as well as established artists like the Beatles and the Stones) believed that artistic expression could be enhanced by mind-altering drugs. The 1960s drug explorations coincided with the free-speech movement, in which many artists and followers saw experimenting with

drugs as a form of personal expression and a response to the failure of traditional institutions to deal with social and political problems such as racism and America's involvement in the Vietnam War. But after a surge of optimism that culminated in the historic Woodstock concert in August 1969, the psychedelic movement was quickly overshadowed. In 1969, a similar concert at the Altamont racetrack in California started in chaos and ended in tragedy when one of the Hell's Angels hired as a bodyguard for the show murdered a concertgoer. Around the same time, the shocking multiple murders committed by the Charles Manson "family" cast a negative light on hippies, drug use, and psychedelic culture. Then, in quick succession, a number of the psychedelic movement's greatest stars died from drug overdoses, including Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, and Jim Morrison of the Doors.

Punk, Grunge, and Alternative Respond to Mainstream Rock

By the 1970s, rock music was increasingly viewed as just another part of mainstream consumer culture. With major music acts earning huge profits, rock soon became another product line for manufacturers and retailers to promote, package, and sell—primarily to middle-class white male teens. According to critic Ken Tucker, this situation gave rise to “faceless rock—crisply recorded, eminently catchy,” featuring anonymous hits by bands with “no established individual personalities outside their own large but essentially discrete audiences” of young white males.¹⁷ Some rock musicians like Bruce Springsteen and Elton John; glam artists like David Bowie, Lou Reed, and Iggy Pop; and soul artists like Curtis Mayfield and Marvin Gaye continued to explore the social possibilities of rock or at least keep its legacy of outrageousness alive. But they had, for the most part, been replaced by “faceless” supergroups like REO Speedwagon, Styx, Boston, and Kansas. By the late 1970s, rock could only seem to define itself by saying what it wasn't; “Disco Sucks” became a standard rock slogan against the popular dance music of the era.



Punk Revives Rock's Rebelliousness

After a few years, **punk rock** rose in the late 1970s to challenge the orthodoxy and commercialism of the record business. By this time, the glory days of rock's competitive independent labels had ended, and rock music was controlled by just a half-dozen major companies. By avoiding rock's consumer popularity, punk attempted to return to the basics of rock and roll: simple chord structures, catchy melodies, and politically or socially challenging lyrics. The premise was “do it yourself”: Any teenager with a few weeks of guitar practice could learn the sound and make music that was both more democratic and more provocative than commercial rock.

The punk movement took root in the small dive bar CBGB in New York City around bands such as the Ramones, Blondie, and the Talking Heads. (The roots of punk essentially lay in four pre-punk groups from the late 1960s and early 1970s—the Velvet Underground, the Stooges, the New York Dolls, and the MC5—none of whom experienced commercial success in their day.) Punk quickly spread to England, where a soaring unemployment rate and growing class inequality ensured the success of socially critical rock. Groups like the Sex Pistols, the Clash, the Buzzcocks, and Siouxsie and the Banshees sprang up and even scored Top 40 hits on the U.K. charts.

Punk was not a commercial success in the United States, where (not surprisingly) it was shunned by radio. However, punk's contributions continue to be felt. Punk broke down the “boy's club” mentality of rock, launching unapologetic and unadorned frontwomen like Patti

BOB DYLAN

Born Robert Allen Zimmerman in Minnesota, Bob Dylan took his stage name from Welsh poet Dylan Thomas. He led a folk music movement in the early 1960s with engaging, socially provocative lyrics. He also was an astute media critic, as is evident in the seminal documentary *Dont Look Back* (1967).



WILD FLAG

All-female bands like Wild Flag continue to take on the boy's-club mentality of rock and roll. The band formed in 2010, featuring members of the 1990s alternative/punk trio Sleater-Kinney and developing a style that combines the energy of punk with some elements of classic rock.

“We’re like reporters. We give them [our listeners] the truth. People where we come from hear so many lies the truth stands out like a sore thumb.”

EAZY-E, N.W.A., 1989

Smith, Joan Jett, Debbie Harry, and Chrissie Hynde; and it introduced all-women bands (writing and performing their own music) like the Go-Go's into the mainstream. It also reopened the door to rock experimentation at a time when the industry had turned music into a purely commercial enterprise. The influence of experimental, or post-punk, music is still felt today in alternative bands such as the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Wild Flag, and Dirty Projectors.

Grunge and Alternative Reinterpret Rock

Taking the spirit of punk and updating it, the **grunge** scene represented a significant development in rock in the 1990s. Getting its name from its often messy guitar sound and the anti-fashion torn jeans and flannel shirt appearance of its musicians and fans, grunge's lineage can be traced back to 1980s bands like Sonic Youth, the Minutemen, and Hüsker Dü. In 1992, after years of limited commercial success, the

younger cousin of punk finally broke into the American mainstream with the success of Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" on the album *Nevermind*. Led by enigmatic singer Kurt Cobain—who committed suicide in 1994—Nirvana produced songs that one critic described as “stunning, concise bursts of melody and rage that occasionally spilled over into haunting, folk-styled acoustic ballad.”¹⁸ Nirvana opened up the floodgates to bands such as Green Day, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, the Breeders, Hole, Nine Inch Nails, and many others.

In some critical circles, both punk and grunge are considered subcategories or fringe movements of **alternative rock**. This vague label describes many types of experimental rock music that offered a departure from the theatrics and staged extravaganzas of 1970s glam rock, which showcased such performers as David Bowie and Kiss. Appealing chiefly to college students and twentysomethings, alternative rock has traditionally opposed the sounds of Top 40 and commercial FM radio. In the 1980s and 1990s, U2 and R.E.M. emerged as successful groups often associated with alternative rock. A key dilemma for successful alternative performers, however, is that their popularity results in commercial success, ironically a situation that their music often criticizes. While alternative rock music has more variety than ever, it is also not producing new mega-groups like Nirvana, Pearl Jam, and Green Day. Still, alternative groups like Arctic Monkeys, Vampire Weekend, and MGMT have launched successful recording careers the old-school way, but with a twist: starting out on independent labels, playing small concerts, and growing popular quickly with alternative music audiences through the immediate buzz of the Internet.

Hip-Hop Redraws Musical Lines

With the growing segregation of radio formats and the dominance of mainstream rock by white male performers, the place of black artists in the rock world diminished from the late 1970s onward. By the 1980s, few popular black successors to Chuck Berry or Jimi Hendrix had emerged in rock, though Michael Jackson and Prince were extremely popular exceptions. These trends, combined with the rise of “safe” dance disco by white bands (the Bee Gees), black artists (Donna Summer), and integrated groups (the Village People), created a space for a new sound to emerge: **hip-hop**, a term for the urban culture that includes *rapping*, *cutting* (or *sampling*) by deejays, breakdancing, street clothing, poetry slams, and graffiti art.

Similar to punk's opposition to commercial rock, hip-hop music stood in direct opposition to the polished, professional, and often less political world of soul. Its combination of

social politics, swagger, and confrontational lyrics carried forward long-standing traditions in blues, R&B, soul, and rock and roll. Like punk and early rock and roll, hip-hop was driven by a democratic, nonprofessional spirit and was cheap to produce, requiring only a few mikes, speakers, amps, turntables, and vinyl records. Deejays, like the pioneering Jamaica émigré Clive Campbell (a.k.a. DJ Kool Herc), emerged first in New York, scratching and re-cueing old reggae, disco, soul, and rock albums. These deejays, or MCs (masters of ceremony), used humor, boasts, and “trash talking” to entertain and keep the peace at parties.

The music industry initially saw hip-hop as a novelty, despite the enormous success of the Sugarhill Gang’s “Rapper’s Delight” in 1979 (which sampled the bass beat of a disco hit from the same year, Chic’s “Good Times”). Then, in 1982, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five released “The Message” and forever infused hip-hop with a political take on ghetto life, a tradition continued by artists like Public Enemy and Ice-T. By 1985, hip-hop exploded as a popular genre with the commercial successes of groups like Run-DMC, the Fat Boys, and LL Cool J. That year, Run-DMC’s album *Raising Hell* became a major crossover hit, the first No. 1 hip-hop album on the popular charts (thanks in part to a collaboration with Aerosmith on a rap version of the group’s 1976 hit “Walk This Way”). But because most major labels and many black radio stations rejected the rawness of hip-hop, the music spawned hundreds of new independent labels. Although initially dominated by male performers, hip-hop was open to women, and some—Salt-N-Pepa and Queen Latifah among them—quickly became major players. Soon, white groups like the Beastie Boys, Limp Bizkit, and Kid Rock were combining hip-hop and punk rock in a commercially successful way, while Eminem found enormous success emulating black rap artists.

On the one hand, the conversational style of rap makes it a forum in which performers can debate issues of gender, class, sexuality, violence, and drugs. On the other hand, hip-hop, like punk, has often drawn criticism for lyrics that degrade women, espouse homophobia, and applaud violence. Although hip-hop encompasses many different styles, including various Latin and Asian offshoots, its most controversial subgenre is probably **gangster rap**, which, in seeking to tell the truth about gang violence in American culture, has been accused of creating violence. Gangster rap drew national attention in 1996 with the shooting death of Tupac Shakur, who lived the violent life he rapped about on albums like *Thug Life*. Then, in 1997, Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher Wallace, a.k.a. Biggie Smalls), whose followers were prominent suspects in Shakur’s death, was shot to death in Hollywood. The result was a change in the hip-hop industry. Most prominently, Sean “Diddy” Combs led Bad Boy Entertainment (former home of Notorious B.I.G.) away from gangster rap to a more danceable hip-hop that combined singing and rapping with musical elements of rock and soul. Today, hip-hop’s stars include artists such as 50 Cent, who emulates the gangster genre, and artists like will.i.am, Lupe Fiasco, Talib Kweli, and M.I.A., who bring an old-school social consciousness to their performances.

The Reemergence of Pop

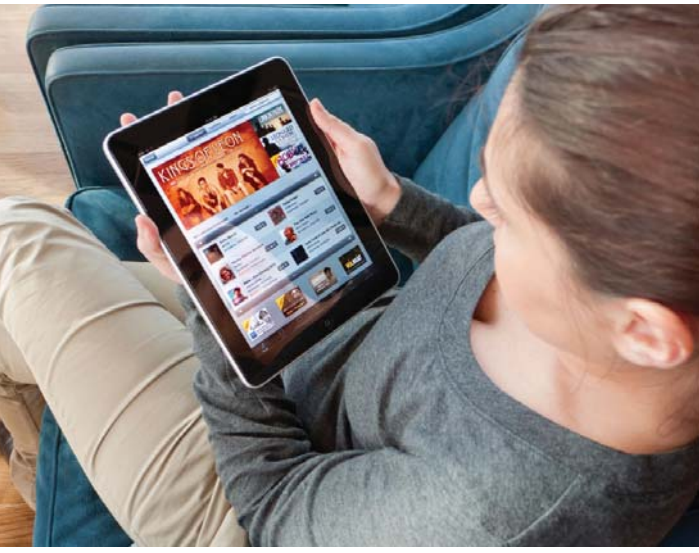
After waves of punk, grunge, alternative, and hip-hop, the decline of Top 40 radio, and the demise of MTV’s *Total Request Live* countdown show, it seemed like pop music and the era of big pop



NIRVANA’S lead singer, Kurt Cobain, during his brief career in the early 1990s. The release of Nirvana’s *Nevermind* in September 1991 bumped Michael Jackson’s *Dangerous* from the top of the charts and signaled a new direction in popular music. Other grunge bands soon followed Nirvana onto the charts, including Pearl Jam, Alice in Chains, Stone Temple Pilots, and Soundgarden.

KANYE WEST AND JAY-Z, two of the biggest names in the music industry, released a collaborative album, *Watch The Throne*, in 2011.





stars was waning. But pop music has endured and even flourished in recent years, with *American Idol* spawning a few genuine pop stars like Kelly Clarkson and Carrie Underwood. More recently, the television show *Glee* has given a second life to older hits like Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'" and Madonna's "Like a Prayer" on the pop charts. But perhaps the biggest purveyor of pop is iTunes, which is also the biggest single seller of recorded music. The era of digital downloads has again made the single (as opposed to the album) the dominant unit of music, with digital single download sales more than ten times as popular as digital album download sales. The dominance of singles has aided the reemergence of pop, since songs with catchy hooks generate the most digital sales. By 2013, iTunes offered more than twenty-eight million songs, and the top artists were leading pop acts such as Katy Perry, Flo Rida, Daft Punk, P!nk, Fun, Rihanna, Maroon 5, Usher, and Nicki Minaj.

iTUNES has shifted the music business toward a singles-based model. While artists still release full albums and some, like Adele's *21*, sell very well, it's also possible to produce a massive iTunes hit, like Carly Rae Jepsen's "Call Me Maybe," before an album is even available (Jepsen's full album sold modestly upon its later release). Even an established artist like Katy Perry initially saw singles from *Teenage Dream* outshine album sales; a parade of huge singles eventually drove the album back up the charts.

The Business of Sound Recording

For many in the recording industry, the relationship between music's business and artistic elements is an uneasy one. The lyrics of hip-hop or alternative rock, for example, often question the commercial value of popular music. Both genres are built on the assumption that musical integrity requires a complete separation between business and art. But, in fact, the line between commercial success and artistic expression is hazier than simply arguing that the business side is driven by commercialism and the artistic side is free of commercial concerns. The truth, in most cases, is that the business needs artists who are provocative, original, and appealing to the public; and the artists need the expertise of the industry's marketers, promoters, and producers to hone their sound and reach the public. And both sides stand to make a lot of money from the relationship. But such factors as the enormity of the major labels, and the complexities of making, selling, and profiting from music in an industry still adapting to the digital turn, affect the economies of sound recording (see "Tracking Technology: The Song Machine: The Hitmakers behind Rihanna," on page 143).

Music Labels Influence the Industry

After several years of steady growth, revenues for the recording industry experienced significant losses beginning in 2000 as file-sharing began to undercut CD sales. By 2011, U.S. music sales were \$7 billion, up for the first time since 2004, but down from a peak of \$14.5 billion in 1999. The U.S. market accounts for about one-third of global sales, followed by Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Canada. Despite the losses, the U.S. and global music business still constitutes a powerful **oligopoly**: a business situation in which a few firms control most of an industry's production and distribution resources. This global reach gives these firms enormous influence over what types of music gain worldwide distribution and popular acceptance.

TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

The Song Machine: The Hitmakers behind Rihanna

by John Seabrook

On a mild Monday afternoon in mid-January, Ester Dean, a songwriter and vocalist, arrived at Roc the Mic Studios in Manhattan for the first of five days of songwriting sessions. Her engineer, Aubry Delaine, whom she calls Big Juice, accompanied her. Tor Hermansen and Mikkel Eriksen, the team of Norwegian writer-producers professionally known as Stargate, were waiting there for Dean.

Most of the songs played on Top Forty radio are collaborations between producers like Stargate and “top line” writers like Ester Dean. The producers compose the chord progressions, program the beats, and arrange the “synths,” or computer-made instrumental sounds; the top-liners come up with primary melodies, lyrics, and the all-important hooks, the ear-friendly musical phrases that lock you into the song. “It’s not enough to have one hook anymore,” Jay Brown, the president of Roc Nation, and Dean’s manager, told me recently. “You’ve got to have a hook in the intro, a hook in the pre-chorus, a hook in the chorus, and a hook in the bridge.” The reason, he explained, is that “people on average give a song seven seconds on the radio before they change the channel, and you got to hook them.”

Today’s Top Forty is almost always machine-made: lush sonic landscapes of beats, loops, and synths in which all the sounds have square edges and shiny surfaces, the voices are Auto-Tuned for pitch, and there are no mistakes. The music sounds sort of like this: *thump thooka whompa whomp pish pish pish thumpy*

wompah pah pah pah. The people who create the songs are often in different places. The artists, who spend much of the year touring, don’t have time to come into the studio; they generally record new material in between shows, in mobile recording studios and hotel rooms, working with demos that producers and top-line writers make for them to use as a kind of vocal stencil pattern.

As was the case in the pre-rock era, when Phil Spector-produced girl groups led the hit parade, many of the leading artists of the post-rock era are women. Rarely a month goes by without a new song from Lady Gaga, Katy Perry, Beyoncé, Kelly Clarkson, Ke\$ha, Rihanna, Nicki Minaj, or Pink near the top of the charts. But the artist who best embodies the music and the style of the new Top Forty is Rihanna, the Barbados-born pop singer. At twenty-four [in 2012], she is the queen of urban pop, and the consummate artist of the digital age, in which quantity is more important than quality and personality trumps song craft. She releases an album a year, often recording a new one while she is on an eighty-city world tour promoting the last one. To keep her supplied with material, her label, Def Jam, and her manager, Jay Brown, periodically convene “writer camps”—weeklong conclaves, generally held in Los Angeles, where dozens of top producers and writers from around the world are brought in to brainstorm on songs. After an album comes out, she may release remixes, like her recent ill-advised collaborations with Chris Brown, to give singles a boost. She has sold more digital singles than any other artist—a hundred and twenty million.



Rihanna is often described as a “manufactured” pop star, because she doesn’t write her songs, but neither did Sinatra or Elvis. She embodies a song in the way an actor inhabits a role—and no one expects the actor to write the script. In the rock era, when the album was the standard unit of recorded music, listeners had ten or eleven songs to get to know the artist, but in the singles-oriented business of today the artist has only three or four minutes to put her personality across. The song must drip with attitude and swagger, or “swag,” and nobody delivers that better than Rihanna, even if a good deal of the swag originates with Ester Dean. ▲

Source: Excerpted from John Seabrook, “The Song Machine: The Hitmakers behind Rihanna,” *New Yorker*, March 26, 2012, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/03/26/120326fa_fact_seabrook.

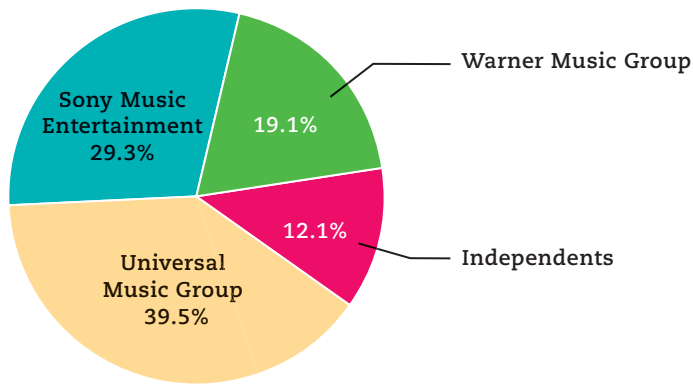


FIGURE 4.2
U.S. MARKET SHARE
OF THE MAJOR LABELS
IN THE RECORDING
INDUSTRY, 2011

Source: Nielsen
SoundScan, 2012.
Note: Figure combines UMG's and
EMI's premerger market shares.

INDIE LABELS are able to take chances on artists like the Mountain Goats, who put out early releases on tiny labels and gained a devoted following on bigger indie labels like 4AD and Merge.

Fewer Major Labels Control More Music

From the 1950s through the 1980s, the music industry, though powerful, consisted of a large number of competing major labels, along with numerous independent labels. Over time, the major labels began swallowing up the independents and then buying one another. By 1998, only six major labels remained—Universal, Warner, Sony, BMG, EMI, and Polygram. That year, Universal acquired Polygram, and in 2003 BMG and Sony merged. (BMG left the partnership in 2008.) In 2012, Universal gained regulatory approval to purchase EMI's recorded music division. Now, only three major music corporations remain: Universal Music Group, Sony Music Entertainment, and Warner Music Group. Together, these companies control nearly 90

percent of the recording industry market in the United States (see Figure 4.2). Although their revenue has eroded over the past decade, the major music corporations still wield great power, as they can control when and how their artists' music will be licensed to play on new distribution services.

The Indies Spot the Trends

The rise of rock and roll in the 1950s and early 1960s showcased a rich diversity of independent labels—including Sun, Stax, Chess, and Motown—all vying for a share of the new music. That tradition lives on today. In contrast to the three global players, some five thousand large and small independent production houses—or **indies**—record less commercially viable music, or music they hope will become commercially viable. Often struggling enterprises, indies require only a handful of people to operate them. Producing between 11 and 15 percent of America's music, indies often depend on wholesale distributors to promote and sell their music, or enter into deals with majors to gain wider distribution for their artists. The Internet has also become a low-cost distribution outlet for independent labels, which sell recordings and merchandise and list tour schedules online. (See "Alternative Voices" on page 149.)

Indies play a major role as the music industry's risk-takers, since major labels are reluctant to invest in commercially unproven artists. The majors frequently rely on indies to discover and initiate distinctive musical trends that first appear on a local level. For instance, indies such as Sugarhill, Tommy Boy, and Uptown emerged in the 1980s to produce regional hip-hop. In the early 2000s, bands of the "indie-rock" movement, such as Yo La Tengo and Arcade Fire, found their home on indie labels Matador and Merge. Once indies become successful, the financial inducement to sell out to a major label is enormous. Seattle indie Sub Pop (Nirvana's initial recording label) sold 49 percent of its stock to Time Warner for \$20 million in 1994. However, the punk label Epitaph rejected takeover offers as high as \$50 million in the 1990s and remains independent. All the major labels look for and swallow up independent labels that have successfully developed artists with national or global appeal.



WHAT APPLE OWNS

Consider how Apple connects to your life; turn the page for the bigger picture.

ELECTRONICS

- iPod
- iPod Classic
- iPod Nano
- iPod Shuffle
- iPod Touch
- iPhone
- iPad
- Apple TV
- iMac
- MacBook Air
- MacBook Pro
- Mac Mini
- Mac Pro
- Magic Mouse
- Time Capsule
- Magic Track Pad
- Airport Express
- Airport Extreme

RETAIL SERVICES

- iTunes
- App Store
- iBooks
- iMusic
- Apple Retail Stores

OPERATING SYSTEMS

- iOS
- OS X

SOFTWARE

- Aperture (photograph manipulation software)
- Apple Remote (desktop management software)
- FaceTime for Mac (video calling interface)
- Final Cut Pro X (digital video editing software)
- iMovie
- iPhoto
- iWork
- iWeb
- iDVD
- Keynote
- Pages
- Numbers
- GarageBand
- Logic Studio
- Safari

CLOUD SERVICES

- iCloud

Turn page for more ▶

Making, Selling, and Profiting from Music

Like most mass media, the music business is divided into several areas, each working in a different capacity. In the music industry, those areas are making the music (signing, developing, and recording the artist), selling the music (selling, distributing, advertising, and promoting the music), and sharing the profits. All of these areas are essential to the industry but have always shared in the conflict between business concerns and artistic concerns.

Making the Music

Labels are driven by **A&R (artist & repertoire) agents**, the talent scouts of the music business, who discover, develop, and sometimes manage artists. A&R executives scan online music sites and listen to demonstration tapes, or *demos*, from new artists and decide whom to sign and which songs to record. A&R executives naturally look for artists who they think will sell, and they are often forced to avoid artists with limited commercial possibilities or to tailor artists to make them viable for the recording studio.

A typical recording session is a complex process that involves the artist, the producer, the session engineer, and audio technicians. In charge of the overall recording process, the producer handles most nontechnical elements of the session, including reserving studio space, hiring session musicians (if necessary), and making final decisions about the sound of the recording. The session engineer oversees the technical aspects of the recording session, everything from choosing recording equipment to managing the audio technicians. Most popular records are recorded part by part. Using separate microphones, the vocalists, guitarists, drummers, and other musical sections are digitally recorded onto separate audio tracks, which are edited and remixed during postproduction and ultimately mixed down to a two-track stereo master copy for reproduction to CD or online digital distribution.

Selling the Music

Selling and distributing music is a tricky part of the business. For years, the primary sales outlets for music were direct-retail record stores (independents or chains such as the now-defunct Sam Goody) and general retail outlets like Walmart, Best Buy, and Target. Such direct retailers could specialize in music, carefully monitoring new releases and keeping large, varied inventories. But as digital sales climbed, CD sales fell, hurting direct retail sales considerably. In 2006, Tower Records declared bankruptcy, closed its retail locations, and became an online-only retailer. Sam Goody stores were shuttered in 2008, and Virgin closed its last U.S. megastore in 2009. Meanwhile, other independent record stores either went out of business or experienced great losses, and general retail outlets began to offer considerably less variety, stocking only top-selling CDs.

At the same time, digital sales have grown to capture 50 percent of the U.S. market and 32 percent of the global market.¹⁹ Apple's iTunes now sells songs at prices ranging from \$0.69 to \$1.49. It has become the leading music retailer, selling 38.2 percent of all music purchased in the United States. (See "What Apple Owns" at right.) Anderson Merchandisers, the behind-the-scenes wholesaler that stocks and manages music inventories at Walmart and Best Buy, is the second biggest music seller, at about 18 percent of the market, followed by Amazon (which also sells digital downloads) in third place, with 8 percent of the market. Alliance Entertainment, a wholesaler that manages and ships recorded music for several hundred online stores, is fourth, with a 6 percent market share.²⁰

In addition to the top music retailers who sell digital downloads and physical CDs, subscription music streaming services like Rhapsody, Spotify, MOG, and Rdio are a small but growing market that can also generate revenue for music labels and their artists. But some leading

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

In only one decade, Apple has redefined the music industry (through the iPod and iTunes), as well as how we consume all media (through the iPhone and the iPad).

- **Revenue:** Apple's 2012 revenue of \$156 billion (compared to Microsoft's \$74 billion) is more than the GDP of Hungary. Apple could buy RIM, Nokia, Twitter, Adobe, and T-Mobile tomorrow, and still have extra cash.¹
- **Salary Disparity:** In 2012, Apple CEO Tim Cook earned \$4.2 million. Apple Store employees earn about \$25,000 a year.² The 230,000 employees who work for China's massive factory plant in Foxconn City, where the iPhone is assembled, earn about \$1.50 an hour.³
- **Music Hub:** iTunes has been the No. 1 music retailer in the United States since 2008. By 2013, iTunes had sold more than 25 billion songs. Apple has sold 300 million iPods since 2001.⁴
- **"Post-PC" Revolution:** In 2012, Apple sold 218 million "post-PC" devices.⁵ Apple controls 39 percent of the smartphone market in the United States, 80 percent of the MP3 player market, and 70 percent of the tablet market.⁶
- **Apps:** By May 2013, Apple had sold more than 50 billion apps.⁷
- **Retail Behemoth:** Apple operates 390 retail stores. In 2012, these stores took in more money per square foot than any other United States retailer.⁸



artists—including Adele, the Black Keys, and Coldplay—have held back their new releases from such services due to concerns that streaming eats into their digital download and CD sales. “Part of the reason is that a song has to be played between 100 and 150 times on a streaming service in order to generate the same licensing revenue as a single download sale,” the *Los Angeles Times* reported.²¹ Yet, a later analysis by the same newspaper suggested there isn't a clear relationship between streaming activity and digital download sales.²²

Some established rock acts like Nine Inch Nails and Amanda Palmer are taking the “alternative” approach to their business model, shunning major labels and using the Internet to directly reach their fans. By selling music online at their own Web sites or CDs at live concerts, music acts generally do better, cutting out the retailer and keeping more of the revenue themselves.

Legitimate online music sales are now a growing success, and in 2011 the music industry recorded its first year of growth since 2004. Although **online piracy**—unauthorized online file sharing—is still a problem, with about one-quarter of Internet users worldwide accessing unauthorized music content each month, the international recording industry group IPFI reported in 2012 that “we are undoubtedly making important progress” toward “developing a sustainable legitimate digital music sector.” There are now about five hundred legal online music services worldwide.²³

Dividing the Profits

The upheaval in the music industry in recent years has shaken up the once predictable sale of music through CDs. Now there are multiple digital venues for selling music.²⁴ But for the sake of example, we will first look at the various costs and profits from a typical CD that retails at \$17.98. The wholesale price for that CD is about \$12.50, leaving the remainder as retail profit. Discount retailers like Walmart and Best Buy sell closer to the wholesale price to lure customers to buy other things (even if they make less profit on the CD itself). The wholesale price represents the actual cost of producing and promoting the recording, plus the recording label's profits. The record company reaps the highest revenue (close to \$9.74 on a typical CD) but, along with the artist, bears the bulk of the expenses: manufacturing costs, packaging and CD design, advertising and promotion, and artists' royalties (see Figure 4.3 on page 147). The physical product of the CD itself costs less than a quarter to manufacture.

New artists usually negotiate a royalty rate of between 8 and 12 percent on the retail price of a CD, while more established performers might negotiate for 15 percent or higher. An artist who has negotiated a typical 11 percent royalty rate would earn about \$1.93 per CD whose suggested retail price is \$17.98. So a CD that “goes gold”—that is, sells 500,000 units—would net the artist around \$965,000. But out of this amount, artists must repay the record company the money they have been advanced (from \$100,000 to \$500,000). And after band members, managers, and attorneys are paid with the remaining money, it's quite possible that an artist will end up with almost nothing—even after a certified gold CD. (See “Case Study: In the Jungle, the Unjust Jungle, a Small Victory” on page 148.) The financial risk is much lower for the songwriter/publisher, who makes a standard mechanical royalty rate of about 9.1 cents per song, or \$0.91 for a ten-song CD, without having to bear any production or promotional costs.

The profits are divided somewhat differently in digital download sales. A \$1.29 iTunes download generates about \$0.40 for iTunes (iTunes gets 30 percent of every song sale) and a standard \$0.09 mechanical royalty for the song publisher and writer, leaving about \$0.60 for the record company. Artists at a typical royalty rate of about 15 percent would get \$0.20 from the song download. With no CD printing and packaging costs, record companies can retain more of the revenue on download sales.

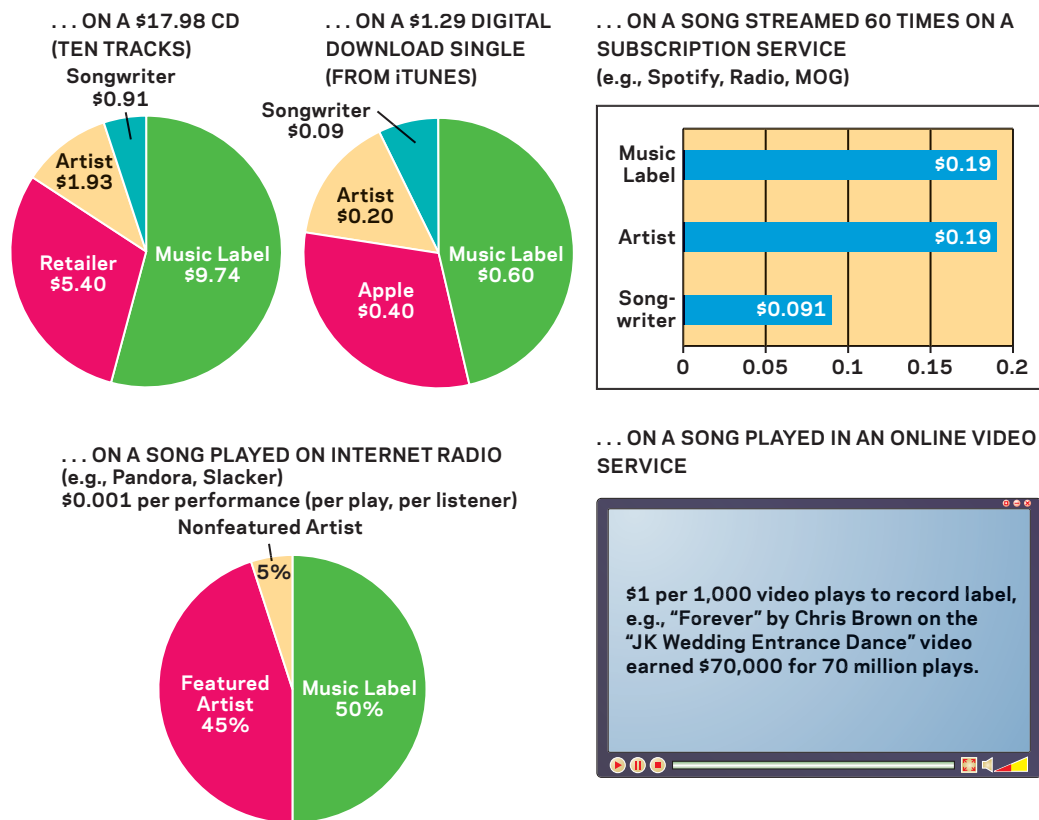


FIGURE 4.3
WHERE THE MONEY GOES
 Source: Steve Knopper, "The New Economics of the Music Industry," *Rolling Stone*, October 25, 2011, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/the-new-economics-of-the-music-industry-2011025>.

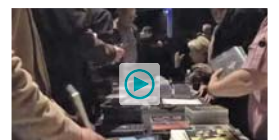
Another venue for digital music is streaming services like Spotify, MOG, and Rdio. A single stream isn't worth much, but collectively, they generate more substantial revenue. A song streamed sixty times is about the equivalent of one download and generates about \$0.38 for the label and the artist, who—depending on the contract—typically split this 50-50.

Songs played on Internet radio, like Pandora, Slacker, or iHeartRadio, have yet another formula for determining royalties. In 2000, the nonprofit group SoundExchange was established to collect royalties for Internet radio. (The significant difference between Internet radio and subscription streaming services is that on Internet radio, listeners can't select specific songs to play. Instead, Internet stations have "theme" stations.) SoundExchange charges fees of \$0.002 per play, per listener. Large Internet radio stations can pay up to 25 percent of their gross revenue (less for smaller Internet radio stations, and a small flat fee for streaming nonprofit stations). About 50 percent of the fees go to the music label, 45 percent goes to the featured artists, and 5 percent goes to nonfeatured artists.

Finally, video services like YouTube and Vevo have become sites to generate advertising revenue through music videos, which can attract tens of millions of views. For example, OK Go's video for "Needing/Getting" in 2012 drew more than twenty-one million views in just a few months. Even popular amateur videos that use copyrighted music can create substantial revenue for music labels and artists. The 2009 amateur video "JK Wedding Entrance Dance" (reprised in a wedding scene in TV's *The Office*) has more than eighty-two million views. Instead of asking YouTube to remove the wedding video for its unauthorized use of Chris Brown's song "Forever," Sony licensed the video to stay on YouTube. At the rate of \$1 per thousand video plays, it ultimately generated over \$70,000 in ad revenue.

There aren't standard formulas for sharing ad revenue from music videos, but there is movement in that direction. In 2012, Universal Music Group and the National Music Publishers

VideoCentral 
Mass Communication
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 /mediaculture



Alternative Strategies for Music Marketing
 This video explores the strategies independent artists and marketers now employ to reach audiences.
Discussion: Even with the ability to bypass major record companies, many of the most popular artists still sign with those companies. Why do you think that is?

CASE STUDY

In the Jungle, the Unjust Jungle, a Small Victory

by Sharon Lafraniere

As Solomon Linda first recorded it in 1939, it was a tender melody, almost childish in its simplicity—three chords, a couple of words and some baritones chanting in the background.

But the saga of the song now known worldwide as “The Lion Sleeps Tonight” is anything but a lullaby. It is fraught with racism and exploitation and, in the end, 40-plus years after his death, brings a measure of justice. Were he still alive, Solomon Linda might turn it into one heck of a ballad. Born in 1909 in the Zulu heartland of South Africa, Mr. Linda never learned to read or write, but in song he was supremely eloquent. After moving to Johannesburg in his midtwenties, he quickly conquered the weekend music scene at the township beer halls and squalid hostels that housed much of the city’s black labor force.

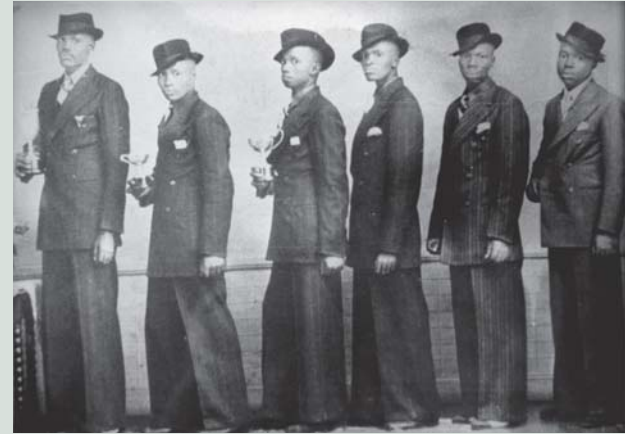
He sang soprano over a four-part harmony, a vocal style that was soon widely imitated. By 1939, a talent scout had ushered Mr. Linda’s group, the Original Evening Birds, into a recording studio where they produced a startling hit called “Mbube,” Zulu for “The Lion.” Elizabeth Nsele, Mr. Linda’s youngest surviving daughter, said it had been inspired by her father’s childhood as a herder protecting cattle in the untamed hinterlands.

From there, it took flight worldwide. In the early fifties, Pete Seeger recorded it with his group, the Weavers. His version differed from the original mainly in his misinterpretation of the word “mbube” (pronounced “EEM-boo-beh”). Mr. Seeger sang it as “wimoweh,” and turned it into a folk music staple.

There followed a jazz version, a nightclub version, another folk version by the Kingston Trio, a pop version, and finally, in 1961, a reworking of the song by an American songwriter, George Weiss. Mr. Weiss took the last 20 improvised seconds of Mr. Linda’s recording and transformed it into the melody. He added lyrics beginning, “In the jungle, the mighty jungle.” A teen group called the Tokens sang it with a doo-wop beat—and it topped charts worldwide. Some 150 artists eventually recorded the song. It was translated into languages from Dutch to Japanese. It had a role in more than 13 movies. By all rights, Mr. Linda should have been a rich man.

Instead, he lived in Soweto with barely a stick of furniture, sleeping on a dirt floor carpeted with cow dung. Mr. Linda received 10 shillings—about 87 cents today—when he signed over the copyright of “Mbube” in 1952 to Gallo Studios, the company that produced his record. When Mr. Linda died in 1962, at 53, with the modern equivalent of \$22 in his bank account, his widow had no money for a gravestone.

How much he should have collected is in dispute. Over the years, he and his family have received royalties for “Wimoweh” from the Richmond Organization, the publishing house that holds the rights to that song, though not as much as they should have, Mr. Seeger said. But where Mr. Linda’s family really lost out, his lawyers claim, was in “The Lion Sleeps Tonight,” a megahit. From 1991 to 2000, the years when “The Lion King” began enthraling audiences in movie theaters and on Broadway, Mr. Linda’s survivors received a total of perhaps \$17,000 in royalties, according to Hanro Friedrich, the family’s lawyer.



The Lindas filed suit in 2004, demanding \$1.5 million in damages, but their case was no slam-dunk. Not only had Mr. Linda signed away his copyright to Gallo in 1952, . . . but his wife, who was also illiterate, signed them away again in 1982, followed by his daughters several years later. In their lawsuit, the Lindas invoked an obscure 1911 law under which the song’s copyright reverted to Mr. Linda’s estate 25 years after his death. On a separate front, they criticized the Walt Disney Company, whose 1994 hit movie “The Lion King” featured a meerkat and warthog singing “The Lion Sleeps Tonight.” Disney argued that it had paid Abilene Music for permission to use the song, without knowing its origins.

In February 2006, Abilene agreed to pay Mr. Linda’s family royalties from 1987 onward, ending the suit. No amount has been disclosed, but the family’s lawyers say their clients should be quite comfortable. ▲

Source: Excerpted from Sharon Lafraniere, “In the Jungle, the Unjust Jungle, a Small Victory,” New York Times, March 22, 2006, p. A1.



MY MORNING JACKET

Though fewer rock bands have found enormous success following the digital turn, this classic-rock-influenced band has built a large mainstream following. Even bigger bands, though, can sometimes make more money licensing their songs to ads than from record sales. My Morning Jacket's songs have appeared in ads for Coors and in several movies.



JUSTIN BIEBER began posting videos of himself singing on YouTube when he was only twelve. By the time he was fifteen, his YouTube channel had over a million views and he caught the attention of a music executive. Signed to a major label (Island Records) in 2008, Bieber is now a certified teen sensation, with multiple hit songs and legions of teenage female fans who have caused at least three stampedes at various appearances.



Association agreed that music publishers would be paid 15 percent of advertising revenues generated by music videos licensed for use on YouTube and Vevo.

Alternative Voices

A vast network of independent (indie) labels, distributors, stores, publications, and Internet sites devoted to music outside of the major label system has existed since the early days of rock and roll. Although not as lucrative as the major label music industry, the indie industry nonetheless continues to thrive, providing music fans access to all styles of music, including some of the world's most respected artists.

Independent labels have become even more viable by using the Internet as a low-cost distribution and promotional outlet for CD and merchandise sales, as well as for fan discussion groups, regular e-mail updates of tour schedules, promotion of new releases, and music downloads. Consequently, bands that in previous years would have signed to a major label have found another path to success in the independent music industry, with labels like Merge Records (Arcade Fire, She & Him), Matador (Yo La Tengo, Sonic Youth, Pavement), 4AD (The National, Bon Iver), and Epitaph (Bad Religion, Alkaline Trio, Frank Turner). Unlike an artist on a major label needing to sell 500,000 copies or more in order to recoup expenses and make a profit, indie artists "can turn a profit after selling roughly 25,000 copies of an album."²⁵ Some musical artists also self-publish CDs and sell them at concerts or use popular online services like CD Baby, the largest online distributor of independent music, where artists can earn \$6 to \$12 per CD. One of the challenges of being an independent, unsigned artist is figuring out how to sell one's music on iTunes, Amazon, and other digital music services. TuneCore, founded in 2006, is one of many companies that



have emerged to fulfill that service. For \$50, the company will distribute recordings to online music services, and then collect royalties for the artist (charging an additional 10 percent for recovered royalty fees).

In addition to signing with indies, unsigned artists and bands now build online communities around their personal Web sites—a key self-promotional tool—listing shows, news, tours, photos, and downloadable songs. Social networking sites are another place for fans and music artists to connect. MySpace was one of the first dominant sites, but Facebook eventually eclipsed it as the go-to site for music lovers. In addition, social music media sites like the Hype Machine, SoundCloud, and iLike; music streaming sites like blip.fm, Rhapsody, Grooveshark, and 8tracks; Internet radio stations like Pandora and Slacker; and video sites like YouTube and Vevo are becoming increasingly popular places for fans to sample and discover new music. The “Free Single of the Week” at iTunes gives an artist a huge promotional platform each week. One such artist was Adam Young, who records under the name Owl City. In 2009, Apple posted his single “Fireflies” as one of its free weekly tunes. Within a month, it was picked up by alternative radio, and by the end of the year it was the top radio song in the country. A year after Young had been making his music alone in his parent’s basement in Minnesota, Owl City’s album had sold 700,000 copies and 3 million song downloads. “If I weren’t doing this, I’d be working in a warehouse,” Young said. “So I’m pretty happy with everything that’s happened so far.”²⁶

Sound Recording, Free Expression, and Democracy

From sound recording’s earliest stages as a mass medium, when the music industry began stamping out flat records, to the breakthrough of MP3s and Internet-based music services, fans have been sharing music and pushing culture in unpredictable directions. Sound recordings allowed for the formation of rock and roll, a genre drawing from such a diverse range of musical styles that its impact on culture is unprecedented: Low culture challenged high-brow propriety; black culture spilled into white; southern culture infused the North; masculine and feminine stereotypes broke down; rural and urban styles came together; and artists mixed the sacred and the profane. Attempts to tame music were met by new affronts, including the British invasion, the growth of soul, and the political force of folk and psychedelic music. The gradual mainstreaming of rock led to the establishment of other culture-shaking genres, including punk, grunge, alternative, and hip-hop.

The battle over rock’s controversial aspects speaks to the heart of democratic expression. Nevertheless, rock and other popular recordings—like other art forms—also have a history of reproducing old stereotypes: limiting women’s access as performers, fostering racist or homophobic attitudes, and celebrating violence and misogyny.

Popular musical forms that test cultural boundaries face a dilemma: how to uphold a legacy of free expression while resisting giant companies bent on consolidating independents and maximizing profits. Since the 1950s, forms of rock music have been breaking boundaries, then becoming commercial, then reemerging as rebellious, and then repeating the pattern. The congressional payola hearings of 1959 and the Senate hearings of the mid-1980s triggered by Tipper Gore’s Parents Music Resource Center (which led to music advisory labels) are a few of the many attempts to rein in popular music, whereas the infamous antics of performers from Elvis Presley

“People seem to need their peers to validate their musical tastes, making the Internet a perfect medium for the intersection of MP3s and mob psychology.”

INTERNATIONAL
HERALD TRIBUNE,
2008

onward, the blunt lyrics of artists from rock and roll and rap, and the independent paths of the many garage bands and cult bands of the early rock-and-roll era through the present are among those actions that pushed popular music's boundaries.

Still, this dynamic between popular music's clever innovations and capitalism's voracious appetite is crucial to sound recording's constant innovation and mass appeal. The major labels need resourceful independents to develop new talent. So, ironically, successful commerce requires periodic infusions of the diverse sounds that come from ethnic communities, backyard garages, dance parties, and neighborhood clubs. At the same time, nearly all musicians need the major labels if they want wide distribution or national popularity. Such an interdependent pattern is common in contemporary media economics.

No matter how it is produced and distributed, popular music endures because it speaks to both individual and universal themes, from a teenager's first romantic adventure to a nation's outrage over social injustice. Music often reflects the personal or political anxieties of a society. It also breaks down artificial or hurtful barriers better than many government programs do. Despite its tribulations, music at its best continues to champion a democratic spirit. Writer and free-speech advocate Nat Hentoff addressed this issue in the 1970s when he wrote, "Popular music always speaks, among other things, of dreams—which change with the times."²⁷ The recording industry continues to capitalize on and spread those dreams globally, but in each generation musicians and their fans keep imagining new ones. ▶

CHAPTER REVIEW

COMMON THREADS

One of the Common Threads discussed in Chapter 1 is about the developmental stages of the mass media. But as new audio and sound recording technologies evolve, do they drive the kind of music we hear?

In the recent history of the music industry, it would seem as if technology has been the driving force behind the kind of music we hear. Case in point: The advent of the MP3 file as a new format in 1999 has led to a new emphasis on single songs as the primary unit of music sales. The Recording Industry Association of America reports that there were more than 1.3 billion downloads of digital singles in 2011. In that year, digital singles outsold physical CD albums more than 5 to 1, digital albums 12 to 1, and vinyl LP/EPs 237 to 1. In the past decade, we have come to live in a music business dominated by digital singles.

What have we gained by this transition? Thankfully, there are fewer CD jewel boxes (which always shattered with the greatest of ease). And there is no requirement to buy the lackluster “filler” songs that often come with the price of an album, when all we want are the two or three hit songs. But what have we lost culturally in the transition away from albums?

First, there is no album art for digital singles (although department stores now sell frames to turn vintage 12-inch album covers into art). And second, we have lost the concept of an album as a thematic collection of music, and a medium that provides a much broader canvas to a talented musical artist. Consider this: How would the Beatles' *The White Album* have been created in a business dominated by singles? A look at *Rolling Stone* magazine's 500 Greatest Albums and *Time* magazine's All-Time 100 Albums indicates the apex of album creativity in earlier decades, with selections such as Jimi Hendrix's *Are You Experienced*

(1967), the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), David Bowie's *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust* (1972), Public Enemy's *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (1988), and Radiohead's *OK Computer* (1997). Has the movement away from albums changed possibilities for musical artists? That is, if an artist is to be commercially successful, is there more pressure just to generate hit singles instead of larger bodies of work that constitute the album? Have the styles of artists like Ke\$ha, Nicki Minaj, One Republic, and Lil Wayne been shaped by the predominance of the single?

Still, there is a clear case against technological determinism—the idea that technological innovations determine the direction of the culture. Back in the 1950s, the vinyl album caught on despite there having been no album format prior to it and despite the popularity of the 45-rpm single format, which competed with it at the same time. When the MP3 single format emerged in the late 1990s, the music industry had just rolled out two formats of advanced album discs that were technological improvements on the CD. Neither caught on. Of course, music fans may have been lured by the ease of acquiring music digitally via the Internet, and by the price—usually free (but illegal).

So, if it isn't technological determinism, why doesn't a strong digital album market coexist with the digital singles today? Can you think of any albums of the past few years that merit being listed with the greatest albums of all time?

KEY TERMS

The definitions for the terms listed below can be found in the glossary at the end of the book.

The page numbers listed with the terms indicate where the term is highlighted in the chapter.

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