

FINDING A NEW BUSINESS MODEL FOR CYBER MUSIC

Digital technology can fundamentally change the music industry. For the first time in history, musicians and music lovers can actually shape the music landscape. This article describes the influence of 'Cyber Indie' on the future of the music industry.

Digital technology for the first time enables a music medium that -due to the binary representation of information- does not depend on physical properties and can be copied, modified and distributed without loss of quality.

Thanks to digital technology, anyone with a computer, the right software and internet access can produce, remix and distribute high quality music. Amateurs have tools at their disposal that come closer and closer to those of professionals and contributing music has become easier. Together with the ever increasing availability of both legal and illegal music on the internet, this makes the digital music culture much more democratic.

Within the culture of digital music, musicians can enrich the music landscape with their own creations, while music lovers, thanks to the internet, have access to an almost endless and varied pool of music. This enables a future in which musicians as well as music lovers set the rules without having to cope with the whims of record companies, radio stations and opinion makers. But to realise this 'achievable Utopia', the will to innovate is necessary.

the established record companies that control most of the copyrights for music.

The extensive copyright catalogues of the established record companies represent a very large monetary value. This explains the defensive attitude towards the digital sharing of music on the internet. Nevertheless the social desirability of this reaction can be questioned. The original purpose of copyrights was not just to reward authors for their creative work, but just as well to stimulate a lively and diverse cultural landscape.

The current focus to economic interests totally bypasses the social and cultural advantages of the digital music culture. This is a short-sighted approach of digital technology that obstructs major innovations in the music industry.

Seen from this perspective it's serious that politicians often let lobbies from the established music industry persuade them to extend copyright for music while it's unclear whether musicians, music lovers and society as a whole benefit from this. Both the established music industry and policy makers show lack of vision with respect to the opportunities offered by the digital music culture.

Fortunately, for musicians that do have vision there is a way to explore the the digital music culture's opportunities. These innovative musicians understand that digital exchange of music can

Making money by free distribution of music is relatively unknown and therefore unpopular but when this innovative model will prove itself as an alternative to merely selling music recordings, it will grow to a fundamental part of digital music culture.

In 2008 Nine Inch Nails released their album Ghosts I-IV under a Creative Commons licence. Six different versions of the album came out simultaneously, from a free digital download up to an "Ultra-Deluxe Limited Edition" costing 300 dollars.



In just one week the band raised 1.6 million dollars, while at the same time the music was freely available. The ultra-deluxe version was sold out the day it was released.

This example proves it is possible to make a living as a musician in the digital era by making your music available to the general public, while at the same time finding ways for creating added value for which music lovers are willing to pay.

concessions. The digital music culture gives 'Cyber Indie' the opportunity to grow.

Musicians have to act now and take matters into their own hands, while the industry is clearly struggling in its quest for a new business model. Making use of the opportunities of the digital music culture requires an active attitude, the guts to innovate and the insight into the wants of the present-day music lover. Now is the time for musicians take control.

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In a more democratic music landscape things will not necessarily become easier for musicians. They will have to set themselves apart, perhaps even more than they had to in the past. One important difference is that the power of the established music industry is declining, while the music lover gets more influence. The internet is becoming the music channel of the future and brings music lovers in touch with a bigger and more diverse market.

The digital music culture can't be stopped. The reality of this has to be accepted.

Musicians who support the distribution of their work increase the chances of being noticed within the abundance of music. Because in the