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## ***THE INTERNET AND MUSICIANS***

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The internet has made it possible for you and me to access millions of songs from thousands of artists on demand. While this convenience is great for people who just want to listen to music, but this system of low-cost, and easily-accessed music on-demand has changed things dramatically for the artists that write and record the music. You will see that while this system has hurt some artists ability to bring in revenue, it has had a very positive impact on the majority.

### ***Musicians before the internet***

Before looking at what effect the internet has had, we'll need to first know what was there before its existence. let's use the example of Johnny Cash to see how someone "back in the day" would have gotten their start in the record business, according to the *Sun Record Company*.

In 1954, Cash moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where he sold appliances, while studying to be a radio announcer... Cash worked up the courage to visit the Sun Records studio, hoping to get a recording contract. After auditioning for Sam Phillips, singing mostly gospel songs, Phillips told him to "go home and sin, then come back with a song I can sell." Cash eventually won over Phillips with new songs delivered in his early frenetic style. His first recordings at Sun, "Hey Porter" and "Cry Cry Cry," were released in 1955 and met with reasonable success on the country hit parade.

So basically, Cash visited a studio physically and eventually recorded a few songs with that studio, who in turn, made and sold physical media, which contained Cash's music. Cash would have received a percentage of the sales from those records being sold, as well as a percentage of any concert ticket sales for his band's performances. The bottom line is that you couldn't listen to Johnny Cash unless you were

in his physical presence, listening to one of his shows or listening to one of those physical mediums on which his music was recorded.

### ***How the Internet Changed Things***

Then the internet arrived on the scene. Even though many of us only think of illegally downloaded music and how that must have hurt many artists, that was only true for the minority. In an interview with author Greg Kot, who wrote *"Ripped: How the Wired Generation Revolutionized Music"* Claire Suddath of *Time* magazine explores some of those issues. When Kot was asked about whether illegally downloaded music is a significant threat, he compared our current situation to a time when it seemed like cassette tapes might become a huge hindrance for the music industry's profits:

In the 1980s the music industry took out full-page ads in *Billboard* and other magazines saying, "Home taping is killing music." They thought that because people had cassette tapes, they would just tape their friends' music and never buy albums again.

These advances did not decrease the desire for music, but rather exponentially increased it. I think the same is true now. More people are listening to more music than in any other time in history. Why is that a bad thing?

None of us think of home taping as a threat to the music industry now, but there was a time when that threat seemed very real, and although it was partially valid, because some people did abuse the technology for their own benefit, it wasn't so common that the music business needed to start discussing mass bankruptcy. In the same way, the internet has had some unfortunate misuse by consumers with regards to music downloads, but that still hasn't put an end to artists making money, along with the labels they sign with.

### ***The Internet Helped Many Artists***

There were many artists who were actually helped by the internet. According to Michael Keshen of *hover.com*, Justin Bieber, Adele, Psy (does “Gangnam Style” ring a bell?), Susan Boyle, Panic at the Disco, and Carly Rae Jepsen, among others, all got their start because of the existence of the internet. Now even though Justin Bieber makes some of us wish that the internet was never invented so that we never had to hear or learn about him... it was a great thing for those other artists and many of us enjoy hearing their music.

In an article he wrote for *US News*, Jason Koebler explored some of the data collected by Robert Hammond (a researcher at North Carolina State University) which dealt with illegal downloads and their actual effect on the music industries profits. Koebler conclusion is that some music piracy might even be increasing profits for certain artists:

According to Robert Hammond's analysis, albums that are shared before they are officially released actually sell more copies than expected, possibly because downloaders are able to "filter" whether an album is any good before buying it legitimately. Hammond found that well-established artists stand to benefit the most from pre-release sharing.

So there seems to even be a bright side to the illegal activity that many of us think is bringing the music industry down.

There is almost always going to be both positives and negatives with any system of commerce, but it seems that, for the most part, the internet hasn't hurt artists, and has even been instrumental in many of the artists that we know and love today getting discovered by labels, or the public directly. It's impossible to know what the future holds, but going off of the past, I believe that it's safe to say that future technologies will only breathe new life into the music industry, helping people everywhere to find some artist that they will enjoy hearing.

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