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# Is the Music Industry Stuck Between Rock and a Hard Place?

## The Role of the Internet and Three Possible Scenarios

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### Abstract

The Internet through the world-wide-web has well and truly opened ‘*Pandora’s Box*’ as far as the record industry is concerned, and there is no going back. The extensive use of illegal file-sharing and illegal downloads of music tracks (totally for free) threatens the very survival of the record industry as we know it. Furthermore this behaviour threatens the very livelihoods of the employees, artists, and bands who work within the record industry. This paper reviews the current situation and then offers three possible scenarios for the future of the record industry (*The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*). Firstly, *The Good*, where the record industry survives; secondly, *The Bad* where the record industry dies a slow death; and finally *The Ugly*, where the record industry dies very quickly. The consideration of several key factors involved will help the industry to focus on maintaining *The Good*.

Keywords: Music Industry, Internet, Downloads, Piracy, Social Networks

The manufacturing, distribution, promotion, and consumption of music have all been radically changed by the Internet and the digitisation of music, and especially through the use of innovative products such as Apple's iPod and iTunes. The MP3 format is continuing to make inroads into the world of music, with a global market share in 2009 of approximately 27% and revenues to the industry worth around US\$4.2 billion (IFPI, 2010).

However consumers, particularly in the cultural industry of music, want it for free. This has been confirmed in previous research, such as that conducted by Leyshon (2009), who feels that this has now become something of a cultural expectation and the default stance; hence the concurrent rise of music piracy enabled by modern technology. Therefore, it is with this notion of 'free' in mind that this paper will explore three possible scenarios, each driven by the Internet, that the music industry may face in the next few years. This will be achieved by reviewing the present state of the music industry and then identifying three directions that the industry may take, based on the current use of various tools by both record companies and consumers.

## Current Situation

### *Industry Structure*

The music industry consists of major record companies, smaller 'indie' labels, music retailers in the form of chains and independent stores, recording studios, and the artists themselves. The current landscape has been neatly defined by Schulman (1999), who by examining the technological revolution in this field, has considered that the advances made in technology had

the potential to greatly change the distribution channels for music. Bockstedt *et al.* (2005) also noted that in this new age, the structural shape of the industry has changed considerably. This is particularly true in terms of the links in the value chain, as digital music retailers are connected to all areas of the industry; not just to the record companies and producers, but also to the legal bodies that represent intellectual property copyright protection. A further change in the value chain identified by Bockstedt *et al.* (2005) is that the digital methods of distributing music have increased in value, while the traditional manufacturing and sales methods have decreased in value. It is also evident that both artists and producers can now by-pass record companies if they should so wish, due to the power and falling costs of home computer recording equipment and software, in addition to the ability to upload recorded songs onto websites and social networks for consumers to listen to. Often it is now the artists themselves who make decisions regarding how they will approach the marketing and promotion of their records, and other material such as merchandise. Therefore it is clear that the record companies themselves are the ones most seriously at risk in this new digital era. This was expressed by Cooper (2005), who maintained that although digital distribution has dramatically lowered both manufacturing and distribution costs, it has also put pressure on marketing and overhead costs.

### *Online Services*

One of the major changes in the last decade has been the ease in which music can be downloaded from the Internet. Whilst much downloading is illegal, many legitimate downloading services that charge a fee also exist and are widely available. Probably the best-known of these services is Apple's iTunes, which was launched worldwide in 2001 and has now reached 10 billion purchased downloads (Downloads milestone for iTunes, 2010). iTunes and similar services cater for the majority of musical genres, and ensure that revenue continues

to flow to artists, record labels, and publishing companies (Leyshon 2009). Artists themselves can also release free songs in MP3 format through these websites in order to ‘give something back’ to consumers, in addition to promoting their music. Hence giveaways are often in the form of sample songs from new or imminent album releases. Many record companies, including the major labels, have begun to realise the opportunities that the Internet offers, and are using new technologies to provide music consumers with fresh and novel ways to interact with music artists and purchase their music. Nevertheless, Vaccaro and Cohn (2004) discussed some traditional record companies as being out of touch with consumers, and called for a framework that makes use of a mix of services marketing and relationship management.

In this context, the influence of ‘blogs’ and podcasts, the modern approach to music reviews, are of great importance. According to Knowles (2008) these websites are fundamental in distributing and reviewing both legally and illegally-sourced music content, with some of these sites also attracting significant a consumer following. The tying in of music marketing and promotion can therefore gain crucial exposure for record company’s artists when used in an official capacity. Social websites such as MySpace and Facebook, and video-based sites such as YouTube, also allow for the tagging, rating and commenting of content that can include songs and music videos. LeBlanc (2006) noted that MySpace is often used by artists in featuring ‘listening parties’ prior to new album launches. Slater and McGuire (2005; cited in Knowles, 2008) have also conducted research on the powerful combined forces of amateurs, Internet peers, and ‘prosumers’ that are created through ‘taste-making’, artist exposure, and the establishment of relationships between content found online. This is especially the case following the more widespread means of the distribution of music that is prevalent through mass consumer use of the Internet. There is also research to show that consumers may need these services, such as Stein-Sacks’ (2006) claim that the majority of consumers want and need

tastemakers, who are credible personalities in their eyes, and proven entities that provide packaged programs and exposure to new music.

Another area of opportunity is subscription models. Fox (2004) identified subscription models as being those where consumers will typically pay a monthly fee in order to access a library of music. McCourt and Burkart (2003) evaluated the usefulness of subscription-based services, noting that they provide a constant cash flow and a benchmark for measuring growth. They also claim these services are particularly useful for the music industry because they allow record companies to maximize profits from consumers who are not even regular users of the service; whilst still heavily promoting the service to those who do, and to charge advertisers higher fees based upon their subscribed user-base (Meyers, 2001; cited in McCourt and Burkart, 2003).

### *Continued Piracy*

Whilst the new technologies offer opportunities for the music industry, they have also made illegal copying and downloading much easier. Cvetkovski (2004) noted that the Internet and peer-to-peer technology in particular have created an environment that is ideal for the illegal swapping and downloading of MP3 files. The consequences of this have been numerous and mostly harmful to those trying to make an income from the industry, be they the record companies or the artists who compose the music. Peitz and Waelbroeck (2005a) cite the diffusion of faster Internet connections, especially in home computing, as presenting one of the largest challenges the music industry is currently facing; in addition to the record companies' claims that the large scale of unhindered Internet piracy could result in the end of the whole industry. In terms of trying to solve the Internet piracy problem, some online music service

providers have already begun to take the initiative by setting up partnership programs with schools and universities in an effort to curb piracy (Connolly and Krueger, 2005).

### *Music Discovery and Sampling*

It has been noted by several researchers that many consumers now use the Internet as their primary tool for discovering new music, be it legally or illegally. Andersen and Frenz (2008) claimed that approximately one quarter of the younger section of the population, ages 15 to 34, and particularly males, tend to discover new music through the medium of the Internet. Stein-Sacks (2006) builds upon this notion by determining that the key is discovery of new music, and that this factor of discovery can be turned into revenue by whichever means are the most successful for that particular artist or type of content. According to Stein-Sacks (2006), it is in fact the ability to access the content and the distribution which may actually drive the revenue of the model; the model not being monetized itself. Therefore it is this distinction which is of great importance.

Since discovery is such a key element of younger people's music consumption behaviour, sampling also is also an important part of the modern music industry; through both the availability of illegal downloads and legal streaming services such as Spotify and We7. Peitz and Waelbroeck (2005b) have shown that the negative effects perpetrated by piracy are in fact offset by positive effects of sampling, and their ability to create customers who are willing to pay more as their personal tastes and product characteristics have been matched. Gopal *et al.* (2006) have also discussed the notion of artists benefitting from online sharing, particularly in the use of economic and technological incentives to sample, purchase, and pirate. They concluded that it was the lowering of the price of sampling that encouraged more purchasing online, with prevention of sampling actually being counterproductive in the long term.



Mortimer and Sorensen (2005) have identified that whilst file-sharing has eroded sales of digital music, some of the affected artists who have been affected have also seen the revenue from associated non-digital products and services, such as live performance tickets and merchandising, increase at the same time. Researchers such as Bhattacharjee *et al.* (2003a) see positive aspects to illegal file-sharing; and both consumers and some artists argue that a large number of consumers tend to download music in order to sample it first, and if they like the music they do subsequently purchase a CD. Therefore they suggest that illegal file-sharing does in fact provide an effective advertising channel, as well as benefits to the record companies by assisting their new artists in becoming well-known at little expense to the labels themselves.

### *Unlimited Choice*

In addition, Meisel and Sullivan (2002) highlighted a key feature of the economic environment created by the combination of digital music offerings and peer-to-peer technologies, namely almost complete access to the music of a consumer's choice. These authors maintained that this element of choice is a sustainable benefit which the record companies need to both recognize and capitalize on when developing new business models, and also claimed that the new sources of a practically unlimited music library are not just held by the record labels, but by the consumers themselves. However, the use of digital platforms to store record company's back catalogues, a notion not possible with physical stores due to lack of shelf space and expensive storage costs, has opened the possibility of earning revenues from these. Anderson (2004) described the effects of this on the development of niche markets, where consumers discover an artist's back catalogue and those of other related artists through the availability of file sharing services (both legal and illegal). This particularly applies to recommendation

engines provided by e-tailers such as Amazon, as well as word of mouth via social networking websites.

### *Mobile Music and the Internet*

The extension of Internet-based music services to mobile phones is another market with room for growth, with opportunities presented by emerging download technologies such as Bluetooth. Portability and convenience have been cited as crucial factors in this area of the market; with Gandhi *et al.* (2009) motioning that music-based features on mobile phones will not be about opportunities to purchase, but rather about playback and discovery. This incorporates a theory that some of these services will in turn evolve and extend the current computer-based music experience offerings to consumers, while other providers will exploit the key unique strengths of mobile communication devices; such as being always-connected, always-carried, and highly personal. Thus Gandhi *et al.* (2009) felt that in order to benefit from the adoption of mobile music, record companies are required to move their strategies from direct to indirect gains in revenue; as with services becoming 'platform-agnostic', there is a need for both mobile phone producers and carriers to increase their number of innovative offerings.

The mobile music industry may well be the largest revenue growth area for record companies in the digital age. It accounts for approximately 40% of all digital revenues, and is even more significant when combined with the 26% return on investment that can be garnered by online advertising; in comparison to the lower 17% that is enjoyed by magazine advertising methods (Aw, 2007).

### *Changing Formats*

In some ways, the upheaval faced by the music industry due to digitalisation is somewhat similar, it could be argued, to the upheaval that it faced with the partial digitalisation of the industry that occurred with the introduction of the CD in the 1980s. As many consumers chose to update their collections and stop purchasing vinyl records, the industry found itself in a position of having the sales in one format declining greatly, whilst those based on the new technology rose greatly. The major difference is that the new format (downloads) are not generating enough sales to replace CDs, due to the impact of music piracy.

This paper will now discuss three different directions that the music industry could possibly take in the future. The factors involved in each may overlap to a certain extent, but on the whole these three scenarios are termed to be that of 'The Good', 'The Bad', and 'The Ugly' to the music industry.

#### The Good

(Record Industry Survives)

In this scenario the industry survives through the maximisation of revenues in areas other than just in the sales of recorded music, by utilising several of the tools introduced by the Internet. As technology has improved over the past decade, particularly the enormous improvement of optical high-speed broadband connections, there are now present opportunities in two major sections of the music industry value chain. Firstly, significantly reduced distribution costs due to the digitisation of products and services. According to Knowles (2008), distribution costs have been reduced to a level is more or less free, or near-free; afforded by the use of digital

distribution services, file-sharing, peer-to-peer networks, and social media networks. This is in addition to the new large-scale websites and services that have emerged in recent years which provide a link between music producers and consumers via methods of artist similarity, taste profiling, and recommendation data; in addition to linking together consumers with both shared tastes and interests. Thus this leads to dramatic cost savings in terms of distribution, as well as promotion. Secondly, in terms of marketing there are also now greater opportunities for the provision of not just the value of the music, but also added value through additional products and services that can accompany the artists' output.

The record industry could also survive by focusing on the modern aspects of conducting business that technology has provided. The Internet has given rise to new social networks that can utilise theories such as the co-creation of value and the establishment of online brand communities. Vargo and Lusch (2007) have claimed that co-creation of value is inevitable as the consumer is effectively a 'co-producer'. Therefore there is opportunity to exploit this in terms of music-based products and services. This is in addition to the use of music in brand-based opportunities; Ballantyne and Aitken (2007) state that goods effectively become service appliances; which would suggest that music, as a good, should be tied in with service branding. Service experience will therefore, according to these authors, extend the life of the brand. The music as a brand concept can be extended further when using the ability of the Internet to create online groupings of like-minded individuals. The potential for brand communities is highlighted by Muniz, Jr. and O'Guinn (2001), who describe such a virtual gathering as being "...a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (Muniz, Jr. and O'Guinn 2001, p.412).

They also claim that these brand communities tend to exhibit three traditional markers of community, those being; (1) shared consciousness, (2) rituals and traditions, and (3) a sense of moral responsibility. This last marker could point to a possible overriding of illicit behaviour such as that of music piracy. McAlexander *et al.* (2002) also emphasised the need to create brand communities, stating that marketers can strengthen brand communities by facilitating shared customer experiences, which subsequently yields a new and richer conceptualization of customer loyalty as integration in a brand community.

In addition there is very heavy advertising of music-purchasing services and web sites such as iTunes and Amazon across the whole spectrum of the Internet, and especially on all kinds of related web sites and social utilities such as MySpace and Facebook. It is also through these social websites that direct interaction between music consumers and fans takes place, be it in the form of recommending artists or songs to each other, or discussing new releases in Internet forums or via blogs. Oestreicher and Kuzma (2009) have discussed the important need for record companies to co-create with these services. There is of course considerable revenue to be gained from all such forms of advertising. Similarly, Curien and Moreau (2009) stated that record companies should look to re-negotiate contracts with artists in order to increase the welfare of both parties in all areas; not just in merchandising and live show tickets, but music sales as well.

There may also still be a need for record companies. Graham *et al.* (2004) conducted research in which the interviewees argued that alternative channels of distribution to consumers, along with the lowering of entry costs to the music market, would pertain to weaken the bargaining position of the major record companies; but on the other hand many artists would continue to seek the benefits of being associated with a major label, such as the marketing expertise. Also

Lam and Tan (2001) felt that new artists are more likely to face greatly increased competition in attempting to gain real recognition through the Internet. Therefore new artists may still need to turn to established record labels, in order to assist them in getting enough attention through professional and intense marketing efforts. This is in addition to other services the companies can provide, such as facilitating the creation of music and distribution processes. So there may still be considerable hope for this scenario yet.

### The Bad

(Record Industry Dies Slowly)

The concept of the record industry slowly declining and dying over the next 5-10 years would be another scenario; possibly through record companies employing technology that is considered by consumers to be unfavourable. The use of Digital Rights Management (DRM), which restricts and controls access to digital content and devices, is regarded as being essential by some, but constricting by others, and could possibly facilitate such a fate. Some scholars feel that DRM is essential to the industry, such as Rupp and Estier (2002). However, according to Buhse (2002), whilst there is a need to deter copyright infringement, at the same time there is a need to increase consumers' ability to access digital goods and services. George and Chandak (2006), Schultz (2005), and Van Wijk (2002) have found that reactions to DRM have been mixed, particularly in terms of the legal implications for the industry. More recently, Sinha *et al.* (2010) conducted research that found that by removing DRM, the industry could in fact potentially turn some pirates into paying consumers; as well as promote an environment of legitimate product-purchasing and consumer willingness to pay. Oddie (1999) also recognised the role that Internet service providers play and their obligations in upholding

copyright protection, and although citing a lack of control over private website content, the providers should be responsible for content hosted directly on their servers. This is in addition to any government-based intervention with these services. Seadle (2003) has considered the legal ramifications of digitised music and copyright, drawing the need to consider aspects of intellectual property ethics. Shang *et al.* (2007) also felt that instead of declaring music to be their intellectual property and resisting the innovations that digitisation has brought to the industry, record companies should try to protect their property rights by way of the consumer benefits that may be brought by network technologies.

Subscription models may yet be the cause of further downfall for the music industry; Bhattacharjee *et al.* (2003b) warned that while revenues and also social welfare can be maximized within a subscription-based environment, they may in fact lead to higher levels of piracy. Michel (2006) also found considerable empirical evidence to show that file-sharing has led to a decrease in music sales. However, this is in contrast to Oberholzer-Gee and Strumpf (2007), who found evidence that was inconsistent with claims that file-sharing is the primary reason for the decline in music sales. Walsh *et al.* (2003) studied German Internet users and found that price sensitivity amongst consumers was similar despite testing two different models of online music distribution, with users having a clear idea on how much such services should cost. Sinha *et al.* (2010) also observed that the current price levels of music are too high. Pricing could therefore be another factor that is slowly eradicating the industry. Khouja and Park (2008) also claimed that as a digital experience good, music needs to be offered at a lower price in order to create higher legal product diffusion; especially when considering the various consumer segments that exist and their differing affinities to piracy. Research on related digital products, DVDs, has found that the perceived fair value of a DVD falls to zero after a period of 18 months to 2 years (Cockrill and Goode, 2010). It is therefore likely that in

consumers' perceptions, CDs may also fall in perceived value by a considerable amount and consumers may thus be unwilling to pay the price that the industry consider to be a fair value for recorded music. Therefore unless price is carefully considered, there may be even further decline in music sales.

Duchene and Waelbroeck (2006) claimed that the role of record companies is already being significantly reduced due to some of the new emerging business models, such as those based on cross-platforms like KaZaA, who actually work together with record companies to create new vehicles to reach mass markets. Therefore peer-to-peer networks are playing the role of advertisers, whilst record companies are in fact becoming basic distributors. Duchene and Waelbroeck (2006) cited the example of the website MP3.com, which has been using data collected on its consumers to provide record companies with information and advice on the creation of new marketing strategies.

Another topic for consideration is that a lack of alternative payment methods to credit cards may also prohibit more consumers from taking up the practice of purchasing music online. Bounagui and Nel (2009) indicated that if alternative payment methods were available, a small majority of their survey respondents said that they would purchase music from Internet retailers. Therefore as it stands, the current payment methods may also be facilitating a slow death for the music industry. Another constriction was identified by Rietjens (2006), who felt that the new wave of licences being set upon peer-to-peer related products and services, including Internet service providers, would prove unsatisfactory and that a voluntary licence system would work better. In summary, unless new business methods and models are adopted, the scenario of the record industry slowly dying is a distinct possibility.



## The Ugly

### (Record Industry Dies Quickly)

This scenario would pose the threat of an accelerated decline in the revenues of the industry, to the point where the major record labels can no longer function and support their artists effectively. This could especially be the result of advances in optical Internet technology. According to the YouTube PowerPoint presentation *Shift Happens*, around 1,900 CDs could be downloaded in less than one second. This scenario could emerge in only a few years time, especially as piracy continues to be the major threat that could spell the end of the music industry. Piracy is particularly prevalent amongst the youth market. Ramayah *et al.* (2009) looked at piracy amongst university students and found that habit was in fact the strongest key driver; leading to calls for further awareness campaigns on the negative effects of piracy, including the illegality and unethical nature of it. Lysonski and Durvasula (2008) also conducted research amongst college students which showed that downloading amongst this section of the population continues at a high rate. Although fear of the consequences of being caught did affect the propensity to download illegally, a strong key driver of these results was that piracy is still not considered to be ethically wrong.

It is in particular the members of Generation Y that give the most cause for concern when it comes to the future of the music industry. In this final scenario, those responsible for the downfall of the industry would be those consumers who elect to stick with the concept of 'free', and this may well be a large group of potential consumers. Several researchers, e.g. Freestone and Mitchell (2004) and Levin *et al.* (2004) found that downloading of film and music files is not perceived as morally wrong, or harming either the record companies or the artists. There is also a lack of social stigma towards piracy, or perceived social cost of

engaging in digital piracy; and in some social environments, consumers who download illegally do it to convey an image of being a rebel (Becker and Clement, 2006). Chen *et al.* (2008) argued that although cost savings from a CD purchase and the low moral reasoning ability of many Internet users are two important reasons for the high rate of piracy, there is also an element of value maximizing behaviour in that consumers are choosing between the values found in obtaining music either legally or illegitimately; with the consumption value also being dependent upon consumers' degree of 'fashion involvement', as music is deemed to be a fashionable product. However, Chen *et al.* (2008) also found that moral reasoning did moderate these factors of value, along with behavioural intentions; and Sinha and Mandel (2008) discovered that positive incentives such as improved functionality can reduce consumers' tendency to pirate music. Therefore, continued anti-piracy education and moral appeals, together with a review of pricing policies, may lead to strategies that can help to avoid this final scenario.

### Recommendations and Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study of the digitisation of the music industry. Based upon the discussions above, it would appear that the most likely scenario is that of *The Bad*, or the industry slowly dying, as opposed to the industry continuously prospering or rapidly declining. Record companies must harness the power of the Internet to an even greater extent than they did before. One question that record companies also need to ask themselves is what can they do with their own tangible products, as well as maintaining their catalogue of intangible offerings in the form of music downloads. Many consumers want their music for free, and that this is the main factor as to why so many choose to download at no cost. If this is

the case, it could be possible for record companies to maintain products such as music downloads at minimal or no cost, but also to continue to use the mass communication advantages of the Internet to enable consumers to perceive their offerings to be new, exciting, and inspiring. This could incorporate ways of interacting with consumers, whilst seeking to gain revenues from additional products and services. These can include their artists' music in the form of subscription services as discussed in this paper.

The use of artist-specific subscription services is already being used to some extent, especially in relation to the replacement of postal-based fan clubs. Thus, these substitute services may also garner long-term loyalty that builds upon the traditional fan club aspects, and continue to add value. Sylva (2000; cited in Fox, 2004) for example proposed the use of websites that have the artist's domain name, providing web sites that are hosted by the artist themselves, offering real-time online chats or special live performances, the provision of collaborative opportunities with an artist, the enabling of registered users to access pre-released music, and creating loyalty award programs and online communities. Sylva (2000; cited in Fox, 2004) also noted the need to provide superior services to those offered by the illegal peer-to-peer file-sharing services, or by ensuring that artist's websites are more attractive to consumers than those that contain pirated music. Kibby (2000; cited in Jones, 2002) has also recognised the socially positive uses of virtual music communities on the Internet, saying that such entities can help dispel a sense of alienation that has become prevalent since the industrialisation of the pop music market; with this also highlighting the consumption of music as an active and incorporative practice, solidifying in the process the illusory bonds between artists and consumers that have become commonplace. According to Kibby (2000; cited in Jones, 2002), the virtual place that is an artist's website home page has facilitated the belief in a local music community.

The need for a change in attitudes by the music industry towards the Internet may be twofold; incorporating a 'loss leader' approach to some of its music products in order to gain revenues from others, a theory also supported by Glynn (2001; cited in Fox, 2004). This is in addition to using the substantial opportunities presented by the Internet to further engage consumers in the activities of their favourite artists. Stein-Sacks (2006) identified the use of advertising and sponsorships, and the selling of additional products and services as key driving factors today. This is as opposed to the past where revenues were derived from selling just the musical content; Stein-Sacks (2006) also claimed that just selling the musical content in the future is unlikely to contribute more than 50% to the bottom line.

Portability and convenience are two dominant elements of new models for the marketing of music; both are offered by the Internet. Social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter are now also extended to, and popular on, numerous types of mobile phone devices. These services are the future and of great importance, hence further exploitation is required. The power of such social networks has already been shown with the Facebook campaign launched in December 2009 that enabled rock band Rage Against the Machine to become the Christmas number one single. As well as the increased use of social networking through mobile phones, similar web-based applications that enable live music streaming have created a new model for consuming music. These services extend to iPod devices and iTunes, the current industry dominators and standards.

Further research is required in order to discover how deeply consumer behaviour has changed in relation to the new model that the music industry is shaping itself towards. By analysing what consumers perceive to be of value in the digital formats, it may be possible to build upon the values offered by both these formats and the traditional physical ones of the CD and the

vinyl record. The three possible scenarios that have been discussed have managerial implications for the record companies, with the marketing and advertising of music in the old model turned on its head by new technology. For example, the rise of social networking has led to the creation of another avenue for the mass marketing of music, and also allows for one-to-one marketing on a personally-tailored level by drawing upon information on consumers' own likes and dislikes. This is a practice already utilised through the use of similar-product recommendation services by music retailers such as Amazon and Apple's iTunes Genius song suggestion function; and also by companies advertising targeted goods and services on social networking sites such as Facebook, based upon users' listed preferences for not just music artists but also films, television, and fashion. An increase in the understanding of consumers' values of digital music, online activities, and purchasing behaviour is critical to ensure that the industry maintains The Good, whilst avoiding The Bad and The Ugly. Only time will tell if a terminal decline is taking place; yet when considering the mass format change to CDs in the 1980s, the music industry adapted and successfully survived. The cyclical nature of the industry, which also affects its musical output, has demanded that it do so once again.

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