# Institutionalizing Authenticity in the Digitized World of Music[1]

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## Abstract

Since the arrival of mass production, commodification has been plaguing markets—none more so than that for music. By separating production and consumption in space and time, commodification challenges the very conditions underlying economic exchange. This chapter explores authenticity as the institutional response to the commodification of music, rekindling the relationship between isolated market participants in the increasingly digitized world of music. Building upon the "Production of Culture" perspective, we unpack the commodification of music across five different institutional realms—1) production, 2) consumption, 3) selection, 4) appropriation, and 5) classification—and provide a thoroughly relational account of authenticity as an institutional practice.

Keywords:     *music industry, authenticity, commodification, institutional theory, production of culture, digitization*

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**Introduction**

The quest to define and understand authenticity in creative industries—particularly in music—is a well-worn path. Across genres and eras, scholars and practitioners alike have explored the delicate dance between musical production, musicians' origin stories, consumers' quest for "realness," and the forces driving their interaction. From record labels in the 1920s using pseudonyms to release "illegitimate" or "identity incongruent" recordings (Phillips & Kim, 2008) and country artists carefully crafting stories around their identities (Peterson, 1997), to session players assuming the role of itinerant blues musicians (Grazian, 2005) and radio DJs struggling to demonstrate their credentials in the eyes of the public (Mol & Wijnberg, 2007), producers, consumers, and selectors continuously seek and craft authenticity.

One likely reason authenticity has manifested itself as one of the most important concerns in the modern music industry is that it has become the linchpin underlying the institutional landscape of the music industry. The commodification of music—rendering music as a good to be exchanged rather than an object of art to be appreciated as a single, one-off experience—became a concern as soon as the first electrical reproduction of music took place (Adorno, 1941). And as this commodification grew as a function of the separation of the sites of production and consumption, authenticity, which helps keep music from becoming a disposable commodity market, grew both increasingly important and increasingly fragile. In order to salvage music as an art form, it became ever more crucial yet ever more cumbersome to repair the severed link between the producer and consumer.[2] Succinctly, the authenticity of music has been in peril ever since the mass reproduction of sound. And the ramifications are clear: if authenticity as an institutional practice failed, the entire music industry would likely

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[2] For the sake of clarity, here we use the aggregate terms of "producer" and "consumer." Thus with "producer" we simply mean the collective of actors responsible for creating music, ranging from the lyricist, the composer, the performer, etc., also including "music producers" who are traditionally seen as being responsible for organizing the production of a musical product. Similarly, we use the term "consumer" as referring to the collective of fans, listeners, and the buyers of records, digital downloads, and streaming services.

follow, dependent as it is on being able to mass produce music in an organizational field where the sites of production and consumption became increasingly dispersed.

As when electrical reproduction first appeared, the recent and ongoing shift to digital production, distribution, and consumption has profoundly changed nearly every aspect of the music business, including (and especially) how authenticity is manifesting itself in this global industry that is expected to approach $50 billion in revenue in 2020 (Bothun, Boyer, Myburgh, & Thomas, 2016). The industry is growing increasingly convoluted as a function of the many dramatic technological and institutional changes that have been taking place over the last two decades: copyright and intellectual property concerns; platform and format competition; fundamental shifts in the meaning and use of genre classifications; data quality and quantity improvements around listeners' habits and the music itself; and constant real-time connectivity between performers and their fans—with identity and authenticity implications for both sides—represent but a sampling of the issues and opportunities facing the industry and its inhabitants in this new, digital world.

Perhaps the most salient consequence of the digitization of music is that the process of commodification has broken new ground. But rather than reinforcing the hierarchical crystallization of market relations, as was the case during much of the history of recorded music, the supply of and demand for music are now finding each other in entirely novel ways, forming ephemeral rhizomatic networks, often generated by algorithms without any human intervention. Importantly, the conduits for exchange have pried themselves from the grip of the few and have been appropriated by the masses. Ushering in the "long-tail" (Anderson, 2004), a wide array of global music platforms have emerged through which unprecedented numbers of producers and consumers are now connected. This connectivity is both a cause and a consequence of the fragmentation of an industry that was, until digitalization, displaying seemingly unassailable levels of consolidation along with routinized production *and* consumption. Now more than ever before the production and consumption of music are

disembedded from the structural constraints of which they were part. This economic disembeddedness cannot only be witnessed in the withering of geographical boundaries—we can stream music in New York City that was produced in Rio de Janeiro mere seconds ago—but also in the waning of economic structures that until recently inhibited migration across the value system of the music industry. Empowered by the digital revolution, musicians can now easily take on economic roles that were traditionally out of their purview and exchange directly with their fan base through a process of disintermediation (Mol, Wijnberg, & Carroll, 2005). While the ramifications are not altogether settled, what is clear is that authenticity has been deeply affected by the introduction digital technology.

In this chapter we advance the notion that the very manner in which actors are brought into meaningful (or meaningless) relationships in the digitized world of music is chiefly a matter of authenticity succeeding (or failing) as an institutional practice. Our line of argument is as follows. We see the commodification of music as the defining feature of the modern music industry, which we identify as having begun the moment that music could be enjoyed outside the site of creation. This process of commodification in turn required the institutional production of authenticity to provide guideposts about the status of a particular work of music as a legitimate product that could be rendered fit for evaluation, whether on artistic or economic grounds. Thus we view the process of authentication as a thoroughly institutional practice, thereby contributing to a growing body of scholarship on institutional work (Battilana & D'aunno, 2009; Jarzabkowski, Matthiesen, & Van de Ven, 2009; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lounsbury, 2008; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). Our investigation yields a relational account of authentication because the manner in which institutionalized actors relate to one another lies at the core of how institutional work is practiced. In doing so, accounting for the "frontiers" of the industry prompts us to examine the digitalization of music by investigating not only how music is commodified in novel ways, but also how the very institutional practices

that enable commodification have been shaped by the relational pathways underpinning the process of authentication.

**Commodifying Music, Institutionalizing Authenticity**

Since the arrival of mass production, questions regarding authenticity have been plaguing markets—none more so than that for music. At the core of the problem lies the commodification that accompanies mass production, which typically leaves products stripped of marks left by their maker and is the result of the separation of production and consumption in both space and time. It follows that commodification both requires the creation of institutions to organize markets and poses a significant challenge for those institutions because when artistic and economic value can no longer be ascertained *prima facie*, that evaluation process is driven by institutional arrangements and practices. Authenticity, seen as the rekindling of the relationship between isolated market participants, is therefore in its very essence an institutional achievement, providing guidance about artistic and economic value and keeping music from becoming a disposable good. Without the institutional practice of authentication, the isolated consumers, producers, and other market mediators are bereft of direct cues about value: what is worth consuming, and vice-versa, what is worth producing.

Early accounts depict authenticity as having an especially fraught relationship with technology: technological progress has the potential to increase consumers' feelings of inauthenticity about artists and their products (cf. Adorno, 1941; Benjamin, 2008 [1936]). For Benjamin (2011 [1936]) the issue of authenticity was always a negative project, chronicling how modern methods of reproduction subtract from the original, yielding a subpar surrogate at best, famously stating: "[e]ven the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (Benjamin, 1968, p. 214). Adorno was similarly no enthusiast of mechanical reproduction. His principal objection to the mass production of music was his fear that it would generate a

homogenous form of low-grade art. He was especially concerned with the notion of the "hitsong," which was the capstone of the industry's Tin Pan Alley Era. His critique not only foreshadowed important debates in economic sociology on the effect of industry concentration on the corollary levels of innovation (Lopes, 1992; Negus, 1999; Peterson & Berger, 1975, 1996), but also makes Mary Douglas' point about institutions doing the thinking for us when saying: "[s]tandardization of song hits keeps the customers in line doing their thinking for them" (Adorno, 1941, p. 25; Douglas, 1986).

Our investigation, however, is a more positive project. Whereas Adorno and Benjamin were chiefly concerned with the original piece of music and lamented the loss of authenticity as it was being mechanically reproduced and readied for mass consumption, our investigation is primarily concerned with how *copies* of the original either succeed or fail to establish themselves authentically. Thus, rather than critiquing authenticity from a position of what is lacking or lost, we analyze authenticity as the institutional response to commodification in the age of digital reproduction. As such, we see authenticity as a fragile balance that needs to be secured if the commodification of music is to diffuse successfully. What is easily established via co-location (i.e., in a music venue) requires hard work and constant attention the moment separation of production and consumption occurs. Now the authenticity of popular music only ever attains a delicate equilibrium.

But before exploring how the impact of the move to digital, is necessary to define authenticity. Although many definitions of authenticity exist (see Carroll & Wheaton, 2009), they share the characterization of "being true to" something—be it an object, an individual, an organization, or an experience. That is, not "fake" or "manufactured" (Peterson, 1997, pp. 206–9). This can mean *archetypical* authenticity, i.e., being true to one's self or background, as in fully and consistently representing one's origins and experiences (Beverland, 2005; Negro, Hannan, & Rao, 2011). It can also mean *stereotypical* authenticity, i.e., being true to a particular type or style, as in being a "pure" representation of a category or form (Carroll &

Swaminathan, 2000; Kovács, Carroll, & Lehman, 2013). And then there is *prototypical* authenticity, i.e., being verified as the original creator of a certain style or product (Fine, 2004). Though prototypical authenticity resembles the other varieties in that it references origins, unlike the other forms of authenticity, prototypicality is used to refer to the progenitor of something, rather than a follower. It is the kind of authenticity reserved for one-of-a-kind things. Of course, the distinct markers for these types of authenticity are often blurred and people and things can span multiple categories. In addition, the concepts can be applied dynamically: what was first seen as prototypical might evolve into becoming archetypical.

In the context of music, examples abound. An artist who grew up in an urban African-American neighborhood rapping about life on "the streets" would exemplify archetypical authenticity (McLeod, 1999). Another example might be the experience of watching the original lineup of a favorite band perform for its hometown in a small nightclub where it played its first live shows. A blues pianist playing nightly gigs at a dingy blues bar on the South Side of Chicago (Grazian, 2005) or a violin, handmade in a centuries-old Italian violin workshop, could be qualified as stereotypically authentic. Elvis Presley, who is typically seen as the creator of an entirely new genre of music, would be identified as being prototypically authentic.[3] Such prototypicality can also be assigned to someone like "Weird" Al Yankovic, a unique and particularly distinctive artist who—while mostly doing covers and parodies—has remained consistent in his approach to original and witty songs over the entire course of his career. The point is not that something *inherent* makes these people, things, and experiences authentic, but that people attribute authenticity to them. In other words, authenticity evokes *authentication*, the process by which authenticity is socially produced and ascribed.

While prior investigations have underscored the historicity of authenticity (Peterson, 1997), what has remained less clear is how reigning institutions condition authenticity. This is

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[3] Of course, many of his songs have been traced by to African American spirituals, which through their contestation highlight exactly the nature of prototypical authenticity.

particularly pertinent because of the laden relationship that authenticity has with its historical underpinnings, which often were institutionalized post-hoc. One need only examine the relationships between specific music and national cultures to see how authenticity has been often been "invented" or retrofitted in order to generate cultural cohesion (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). By unpacking the reigning institutional arrangements of the music industry, we aim to provide a fresh and comprehensive account of how authenticity is woven into the fabric of today's world of music. To do this, we begin with the initial commodification of music and how that created the conditions for the need for authentication in the music industry.

Historically speaking, the first contours of the commodification of music could be observed during the era of Tin Pan Alley, the name given to the agglomeration of music publishers, composers, and lyricists who populated West 28th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenue in New York City at the turn of the 19th century. What set Tin Pan Alley apart from preceding eras was that, while music was still enjoyed in music halls, the diffusion of sales that resulted from the rise of sheet and recorded music set in motion the institutionalization of a novel set of industry practices and conventions where the production and the consumption of music no longer coincided in space and time. Economically speaking, the significance of the Tin Pan Alley Era was that it necessitated the formation of institutional arrangements to facilitate commercial exchange of commoditized music between producers and consumers beyond the site of origin. While of course music was bought and sold in the preceding times, during this era, new institutional arrangements emerged that accommodated economic exchange between transacting parties that would otherwise have been bereft of direct cues about their respective behavior (cf. White, 1981).

To be sure, the formation of institutions in the face of commodification is not unique to the music industry, as it has been seen as the underlying rationale for the development of trade in general (see D. C. North, 1990). But the Tin Pan Alley Era did mark a remarkable turning point as the music industry had hitherto mainly relied on the direct engagement of consumers

and producers.[4] Eventually Tin Pan Alley would become economic shorthand for describing the particular way the modern music industry was organized, revealing for the first time the key institutional practices necessary to uphold it. It provided the blueprints for how music was selected by institutionalizing the music halls as the evaluative arenas for new songs. And furthermore, through its focus on hit songs, it also galvanized the manner by which sheet and recorded music was produced and readied to reach geographically dispersed masses.

In summary, this period from the late-19th century through the mid-20th century marks the earliest moment in the history of music that music became a commodity *institutionally*. Accordingly, the basic tenet of our chapter is that commodification relies on the creation and maintenance of institutions that are "doing the thinking for us" Mary Douglas (Douglas, 1986), and are in turn reinforced by the social construction of authenticity. Authenticity is in its very essence an institutional achievement: with the rise of the commodity came the rise of specific economic institutions *which both required and enabled the production of authenticity*— guidance to suggest a product is "real", "legitimate", and "valuable." As such, we see the process of authentication as an institutional practice, embedded in broader understandings of institutional work that establishes, changes, and repairs institutional arrangements (Battilana & D'aunno, 2009; Jarzabkowski, Matthiesen, & Van de Ven, 2009; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lounsbury, 2008; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). As authentication is needed to bridge the existing divide between isolated producer and isolated consumer, it is a thoroughly relational practice, bringing together disparate sets of actors around a common understanding of worth in a commodified marketplace. It is in this sense that it echoes the relational nature common to institutional practices as they underpin "how institutions are created, maintained, and disrupted

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[4] While indeed music has been enjoyed by consumers in the absence of its producers through the dissemination of sheet music, it was precisely the failure of the establishment of effective institutional frameworks that hindered the formation of music as an industry. In his review of the zenith of classical music in Europe from 1709-1850, Scherer (2008, p. 14) describes copyright as virtually a defunct institution, commenting: "[p]erhaps most telling of all, what is widely considered the golden age of classical music composition occurred with very limited presence of an effective copyright domain."

through the actions, interactions, and negotiations of multiple actors" (Jarzabkowski, Matthiesen, & Van de Ven, 2009: 284).

It has been said that in many ways, institutional theory is a theory of diffusion: the study of how products or practices that spread beyond their site of origin require institutional frameworks to facilitate their subsequent acceptance and adoption (P. J. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Fligstein, 1985; Haveman, 1993; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). Building on this idea, our chapter chronicles the practice of authentication as the institutional response to the commodification of music, which has been pushed to greater heights by digitization and the Internet. Our analysis directs attention to the complex of institutions that facilitated and reinforced the commodification of music across different eras and continues to do so today. We analyze the most significant institutional changes in the music industry through the concept of value, considering the industry only insofar as it concerns how value is institutionally expressed.

Our analytical approach draws inspiration from the "Production of Culture" perspective (Bourdieu, 1983, 1993; Crane, 1992; Peterson, 1976, 1990; Peterson & Anand, 2004; Ryan, 1985). While this perspective has been hailed as one of the most influential in terms of how popular culture is currently understood (Mukerji & Schudson, 1991), it has had a particularly strong following within studies of the music industry due to the trailblazing work by the late Richard Peterson. One of Peterson's key contributions was his conceptualization of how the demand side and the supply side of the creative industries could be integrated into a coherent sociology of markets, at a time when the prevailing thinking was one of disconnected realms (cf. White, 1981). In his accounts of the music industry, the role of audiences was particularly pronounced, spurring a new avenue of research, especially with regard to classification and evaluation of cultural products (e.g., Lena & Peterson, 2008). Because of its explicit focus on institutions (see Peterson & Anand, 2004), the "Production of Culture" perspective is particularly well-suited for our purposes.

Building on this perspective, we first look at the key developments in the last two decades that have rearranged the way in which producers and consumers of music interact and how value is both created and appropriated institutionally. In doing so, we frame our analysis around five primary facets of the industry gleaned from the "Production of Culture" perspective: 1) the production, 2) the consumption, 3) the selection, 4) the appropriation, and finally, 5) the classification of music (see Figure 1). In our analysis, we locate the "evaluative space" adjacent to the "monetary space," capturing the cycle of exchange between value and money, respectively. Each space is interceded by production, consumption and selection, which have a performative relationship with how evaluative and monetary flows are enacted.

[Figure 1 here]

Unpacking our model, "production" refers to how the music industry creates value in terms of a commercial product. This has changed dramatically over the history of the music industry and has played a crucial role in defining and influencing the industry over the past two decades. "Consumption" encompasses the consumers of music as well as the platforms and media they use to listen to it, whether recorded or live. "Selection" is the institutional process of market mediation that determines the how value is "selected" and "determined" (Cattani, Ferriani, & Allison, 2014; Lampel, 2011; Wijnberg, 2004; Wijnberg & Gemser, 2000). Faced with a plethora of choice—a problem that has only become more articulated over time—the music industry has relied on a class of selectors: actors who "pre-filter" the supply of music by identifying what is "good," "bad," and "worthwhile," thereby shaping the industry as the conduits of information about what is valuable and what is not (Hirsch, 1969). This task was typically performed by intermediaries in ancillary industries such as broadcast radio, where DJs determined what was hot (and what was not) when deciding upon their playlist. With an institutionalized understanding of value in place, the producers and consumers of music can

coalesce around common understanding of worth (e.g., Anand & Peterson, 2000). "Appropriation" is the process of extracting value from music through rent-seeking behavior. Copyrights, royalty payments, service fees, and the percentage of revenue from the sale of a CD that a label gives to an artist—each refers to a form of appropriation. Like most markets, the music industry can be defined in large part by the stakeholders who hold power and vie for the ability to take a larger share of the value pie. Finally, "classification" refers to the categories or genres that help define the marketplace for consumers, selectors, and producers alike. Here, think of the institutional logics stemming from genre-classification, which emerged as institutionalized prescriptions of what to produce and what to consume.

Our chapter is organized as follows. Using these five institutional realms and their interaction as our guideposts, we first explore the impact of recent technological innovations—digital files and sharing, streaming services, social media, and the field of Music Information Retrieval (MIR), among others—on the process of commodification of music. We subsequently consider the implications of these developments for our understanding of authenticity as an institutional practice. In doing so, we explore the different institutionalized "zones of authentication," the relational links between institutions, where these constituent parts of music are enacted. Just as the process of music's commodification has been profoundly changed through the introduction of digital technology, so too have the various institutional practices of authentication. We turn to these processes after our discussion about the current commodification of music.

**Commodification in the Digital Era: A Brief Analysis of the Current State of Music**

The Digital Era builds on and adds to the accumulation of previously diffused practices and institutional arrangements that formed and evolved over the 100+ years of the modern music industry. We delineate this era as having begun in 1999 with the launch of Napster, the first widespread, internet-based, peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing service. While the mp3 digital

file format and sharing services existed prior to Napster, it was the first service that married the two in a relatively seamless user experience. This ushered in an entirely new age for the music industry: one characterized by broader access to increasingly unlimited (legal and illegal) music and all the consequential fights, adjustments, and changes that went along with it. The "death of scarcity" (Dubber, 2007) that defines the current state of music production and consumption has had profound implications for each institutional facet of the industry. In this section we unpack how the digital era has affected the process of commodification across the different institutional realms, making use of the analytic framework afforded by the "Production of Culture" perspective.

*Production*

The current state of the music industry is perhaps most succinctly characterized by the gradual disappearance of a tangible product. From sheet music to vinyl to 8-tracks to cassettes to CDs, consumers have always been able to hold whatever music they purchased in their hands. Some of these formats continue to sell, especially among older and particularly die-hard music fans, but the trends are clear: beginning with the mp3 in the 1990s, the tangible manifestation of music products is shrinking and being rapidly replaced by digital files of various formats. In 2015, digital revenues passed those for physical for the first time (45% to 39%), the conclusion of a trend that has been in progress for over a decade (IFPI, 2016).

Over the past decade, music has continued its trend towards incorporeality, shifting our understanding from physical product to an ephemeral and digital environment. Music in its current state can best be summed up as "there is no there there" (Stein, 2013 [1937]). Instead, the medium—whether iPhone, satellite radio, or computer—has become the key feature of the product as much as the music itself. The delivery mechanism remains the portal through which nearly anything can be heard. Streaming remotely stored audio via an internet-connected device has been the most recent—and some argue final (e.g., Thacker, 2015)—move for

music. The primary consequence is the nearly unlimited selection such a delivery mechanism provides: without any locally-stored files, millions of songs can be kept in data centers and accessed seamlessly by millions of people simultaneously, provided they have internet connectivity and a device on which to play the streaming tracks. Such access extends beyond audio, as well. Video streaming has actually become the single largest online source for consuming music, as YouTube attracted nearly 800 million monthly music viewers in 2015 (IFPI, 2016) and an early 2016 survey found that 43% of Americans had visited YouTube in the prior week for music (Edison Research, 2016).

The rise of digital audio and video files has, unsurprisingly, had a profound impact on the artists and producers of music. Along with falling prices of older production tools, a suite of computer programs has democratized the creation process. High fidelity, fully arranged songs can be recorded to audio or video by an individual in her home with little more than a computer and a microphone. The combination of dramatically easier and less expensive production with smaller and more transportable files means that the entire production side of the music industry has undergone a revolution: while previous means of creating and disseminating music still remain, they are notably less central to the industry than they were previously, and the entire process has become far more accessible to all (Leyshon, 2009). Moreover, the economic centers of the industry—e.g., Los Angeles, New York, Nashville, and London, where much of the recording was done and many of the major labels are headquartered—are similarly less important to production. Stephen Cooper, the CEO of Warner Music, one of the "Big Three" major record labels remaining (along with Sony BMG and Universal), commented that the industry is "on the verge of a much flatter world where stars are born out of almost any country" (Flanagan, 2016).

At the same time, the production of popular mainstream music is becoming consolidated among a handful of hit-generating writers and producers in the likes of Swedish songwriter, Max Martin. These prolific individuals churn out "ear worms" (songs easily stuck in listeners'

heads, whether they want them there or not) for many of the best known pop and hip-hop artists. Often working in songwriting or production teams, a relatively small group of people are now responsible for a disproportionate amount of the music we hear the most, whether on the radio or across other popular culture media (Seabrook, 2015). Most of them are not writing any songs for themselves, meaning many of the most popular artists are not writing for themselves either. Both sides of the equation—writers and artists as well as the major record labels—are capitalizing on the fact that the current production environment rewards quickly produced, catchy "blockbuster" songs (Elberse, 2013).

As mentioned before, the link between innovation and industry concentration has been a concern for many decades. While indeed certain specific areas have witnessed increased concentration during the Digital Age, and have perhaps instantiated the "economics of superstars" (Rosen, 1981), on the whole the production of music has seen the arrival of the "long-tail" (Anderson, 2004). As such, the sprawling growth of intermediating platforms has vastly increased the number of producers, triggering a significant and arguably long-lasting decrease in the concentration index of the music industry. Importantly, no longer is music being offered as part of a hit-factory philosophy that was traditionally embraced by the major record companies (Vogel, 2014), but now little known professionals and amateurs are also able to sell their music to the public or even offer it for free in exchange for "generating exposure."

*Consumption*

On one hand, the rise of Napster represented a dramatic change in the way that people consumed music. Nearly any song consumers wanted was available, easily and for free (if illegally), provided they had an internet connection (Witt, 2015). On the other hand, the legitimate side of the industry's evolution from physical objects to digital files was characterized less by a step-change and more by a gradual process that initially more closely resembled one with which consumers were familiar (see Hargadon & Douglas, 2001). The

iPod, upon its initial launch in 2001, replicated a familiar ownership model, simply replacing tangible products with digital songs. Downloading from iTunes became the new way to buy a song, slowly phasing out CDs. Consumers searched the iTunes store, which was easily navigated along genre or popularity lines like the record stores consumers had been frequenting for decades and bought music they could own and store locally.

Perhaps the biggest change brought about by Napster and iTunes was that individual songs could now be downloaded illegally or purchased easily for $0.99 instead of being packaged as part of an album. In prior eras, the concept of an album as a complete, tangible artistic statement meant that consumers were forced to buy 10-15 songs at once even if they had only previously heard and liked one or two of them.[5] Napster (and other illegal P2P services) and iTunes (legally) ushered in an era of singles-based shopping and consumption of music, which was reinforced by computer media players as well as Apple's iconic iPod and their shuffle features. Shuffling from among hundreds of thousands of digital songs recreated consumers' radio experience: a curated exploration of many different artists in succession rather than a start-to-finish tour of an entire album. Now the curation was done by consumers themselves, geared exclusively towards their own tastes. An unwanted song could be simply skipped without fear of missing what a DJ might play next; there was no DJ, only the software code determining the next song. Further, no genre boundaries characterized the listening experience, unlike traditional radio (see Rossman, 2012). Though radio continues to be a popular choice for the average music listener,[6] the age of digital music has brought about an extremely personalized and "personalizable" alternative. Consumers' attention spans no longer

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[5] Vinyl, cassette, and CD singles all existed at various points in the industries history, but were rarely a substantial percentage of sales in the US (Recording Industry Association of America data, accessed here:
http://www.digitalmusicnews.com/2014/08/15/30-years-music-industry-change-30-seconds-less).
[6] Despite claims to the contrary and even in spite of the rise of internet radio, terrestrial radio listening has remained nearly constant through the Digital Era. Roughly 90% of Americans across all age groups listen to radio weekly, for an average of 2.5 hours per day. In 2013, more Americans aged 18-34 listened to the radio than used the internet on a weekly basis. (Priceonomics Blog, 2013).

needed to be held for an hour at a time by a single artist. The product has effectively disappeared, both in its physical form and its format.

The move to streaming technology has of course been accompanied by the rise of streaming websites, services, and mobile applications. Spotify (launched in 2008 in Sweden and 2011 in the U.S.) and its roughly 100 million subscribers represents the largest of the "on demand" audio platforms: services on which listeners can select whatever they would like to hear from among tens of millions of songs, though more traditional radio-style functionality also exists. Consumers can use an advertising-supported membership for free or pay $9.99 per month (in the U.S.) for unlimited and uninterrupted access. Other sites, including SoundCloud (launched in 2008) and even Facebook also provide an "on demand" platform for artists who wish to share their music.

Alternatively, internet radio services like Pandora (launched in 2005, currently the most popular audio service [Edison Research, 2016]) replicate the classic radio experience online, but are more tailored to individual tastes. Listeners choose a song or an artist "seed" from which a playlist of similar songs will be created via Pandora's algorithmic "Music Genome Project" and played in succession. For streaming video, YouTube (launched in 2005 and now owned by internet behemoth Google) can function as both an "on demand" service where listeners select one video after another, or as a passive radio-like experience with subsequent videos being played automatically, based on a "black box" algorithm via user-generated or company-curated playlists.

Consumers, after watching the music industry fight piracy, sharing services, and "free" music for nearly a decade, now essentially have access to anything they would like to hear, wherever they can get an internet connection. Ironically, consumption can now actually be free—streaming services' advertising-supported business model attracts far more subscribers than the does the paid tier—or had for a small monthly fee. All of this is a boon for anyone interested in hearing music, new or old: the quantity of music available at the average

consumer's fingertips stretches beyond imagination. And it can be heard for a price that is at worst reasonable and at best a steal, though this is bound to change sooner or later. The legitimacy of streaming services has, for now, somewhat reduced industry's piracy concerns, as research has demonstrated that Spotify subscribers were likely to stop downloading music illegally (Witt, 2015). But it also shows that they stop buying albums, too; and someone has to pay for the easy access.

*Selection*

In speaking with a musician (who requested that he remain nameless for reasons that will be obvious shortly), he suggested that the most popular music blogs, which tend to skew towards the "indie"-sounding artists and the scenes affiliated with them, are some of the last bastions of genre reinforcement (see *Classification* below). This particular musician has previously released sunny, singer-songwriter pop music, but opted to change the name he uses for other music projects. The change has been made in order to obscure his identity to release new songs—darker, more ambient, and more electronic than his earlier work—directly to the music blogs. When asked why he needed to hide his previous identity, he suggested that the new songs would be much less likely to receive coverage and promotion if his earlier work were linked to the new tracks. His experience is a fitting transition to the selection forces currently guiding consumers' listening habits and helping to inform producers' decisions. Though there are more human selectors (like bloggers) than ever before as everyone with a social media account can recommend and review music, the shift has been away from human curation.

Whereas historically there were a handful of highly central tastemakers—radio, a few nationally broadcast television shows, several magazines, MTV[7]—the internet and technological advances of the past two decades have dramatically increased the number of selectors connecting artists and consumers via new music. While the advent of the digitization of music brought the promise of being able to free oneself from the shackles of music industry by being able to market and sell music autonomously, attracting attention to one's songs proved an arduous task for most DIY musicians, and they relied on this explosion of selectors. However, with the fragmentation of the selection space, eliciting sufficient interest remained problematic as most selectors were bloggers with little or no commercial clout. And whereas the major record companies seemed to be at a loss as well when faced with the supposed "democratization" of the internet, non-human curation brought them respite.

Human curators certainly remain and continue to wield influence, from radio to blogs and from podcasts to curated playlists on music services, but the rise of streaming services has meant that more and more people are accessing new music via personalized, algorithmically-generated playlists. Playlists are the new discovery mechanism of choice, echoing the mixtapes of the 1980s and 1990s. As such, whether Pandora's Music Genome Project, Spotify's Discover Weekly and Release Radar playlists, or any other music services' in-house playlists, these algorithmically-driven recommendation engines are all aiming to replicate the experience of having a your most trusted friend consistently provide perfectly tailored recommendations, only at scale: remove most of the human element, ideally to replace it with the best possible version of a person.[8]

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[7] For as long as the music industry has existed in some form, there have been tastemakers located on the fringes of the industry, from art houses and coffee shops to college radio and fan zines. However, prior to the rise of the internet, these paled in comparison to the more central, mainstream "selectors."

[8] There are differing levels of human curation involved in these algorithms, ranging from heavy input from musicologists on the "Music Genome Project" to additional human song selection in Apple Music, but the idea is to take the human input and behavior and devise algorithms to provide tailored playlists for millions of users. At that scale, having humans provide individualized lists is impossible, which is why we refer to the playlists as algorithmically-generated.

With the reliance on algorithms, data is at the center of selection. An entire field, Music Information Retrieval (MIR), has grown out of computer science and machine learning over the past decade as a means of extracting musical information from songs. Such data includes the more basic tempo and key of a song, as well as what genre it may be, how many instruments are playing, and more ostensibly subjective elements like a song's "danceability." While this kind of data is generated by a handful of organizations and labs, the current gold standard, The Echo Nest, was bought by Spotify in 2014. The highly-detailed data Spotify now possesses for tens of millions of songs powers its Discover Weekly recommendation playlist, as well as just about every other feature the service rolls out, and allows them to offer quickly and at scale what would take a team of people decades to accomplish. Owing to the quality of the data—which includes not just the musical elements of songs, but also a constantly-updating web crawl of how people are talking about artists and their music and the listening habits of all 100+ million Spotify users—Discover Weekly represents the kind of experience other recommendation engines are trying to match and surpass.

Owing to the confluence of the diminished value of genres and the increased power of data-driven playlists, a major trend in the selection process is the move towards mood- and context-driven music recommendation. This means rather than hearing "rock" songs, consumers can choose, or be presented with based on their location and time of day, playlists like "Easy Sunday Morning," "Coffee House," or "Sweet Dreams." Each comes with expectations for sound and style like genres do, but are specifically catered to context.

As has always been the case (see, e.g., Coase, 1979), the major record labels are still trying to exert their influence in the selection process and justify their continued dominant position in the industry: consider the fact that the three remaining majors own a significant part of Spotify.[9] Now the owners of the company that selects new music are benefitting directly

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[9] See: http://computersweden.idg.se/2.2683/1.240046/documents-reveal-major-labels-own-part-of-spotify

from the music that it hypes, raising the question of whether we have a contemporary form of "institutionalized payola" (Dannen, 1991). Though ostensibly determined by algorithms, it is difficult to ignore the possibility that the majors have their thumbs on the scales when it comes to selecting which songs get put in Spotify's popular playlists, a practice that has been confirmed (Resnikoff, 2016). A strong inorganic element to selection remains as prevalent as ever, just under different auspices.

Currently, selection is not only about trying to find each individual listener songs that they will love, it is also about matching playlists perfectly to the time and place consumers find themselves. With geolocation technologies on smartphones this is becoming easier and easier, yet without accidental discovery the process of music discovery and exploration is becoming less exploratory and more passive. It is also becoming routinized: consumers can now expect to receive solid recommendations on a regular basis. While wonderful for discovering new music and finding the appropriate songs for a listener's current situation, recommendation engines are starting to feel analogous to overfitting a model in statistics. That is to say, by perfectly tailoring everything about music selection, recommendation playlists are removing the power of serendipity that should accompany any appreciation of art (see Ratliff, 2016). There is no room for exploration; that experience may be slipping away.

One final element of the current selection regime warrants mentioning. The proliferation of data does not stop at the music itself. Artist and song mentions on social media, streaming counts, and download figures all feature in today's processes of exposing consumers to new music. Companies like Shazam allow listeners to identify music they hear, simply by allowing their phone to "hear" it and comparing that to an MIR-generated song fingerprint. Not only does this return the artist and song title to the user, it also allows industry stakeholders to know who is listening to (and liking) what songs in what geographies. Musicians' marketing campaigns and tours are now determined with the help of this kind of information.

It would seem, a decade after Salganik, Dodds, and Watts (2006) demonstrated the value of social influence in driving the music that consumers opt to listen to, listen counts matter more than ever. They help determine what goes on discovery playlists and how and where labels and managers spend their time and money. Even low play counts can be beneficial, provided social media buzz is strong enough: such a scenario could land an artist on a "Fresh Finds" playlist, aimed at listeners who prefer to be among the first to know of new artist, and rocketing the previously unheard of artist into popularity. At which point, of course, the early adopting listener would probably stop listening to them, deeming them too big to be authentic.

*Appropriation*

To the copyright holders go the royalties, typically. But because of the intangible nature of the musical product and the ease of transfer that has ushered in, copyright and royalties are as important, convoluted, and contentious as they have ever been. After years of fighting piracy and the specter of free music by targeting P2P file sharing services and consumers,[10] the recording industry and record labels have turned their attention to digital services, resuming their seemingly never-ending battle over copyright issues and royalty payments. Though industry revenue rebounded from nearly two decades of decline in 2015 due primarily to increases in streaming subscriptions (IFPI, 2016), it remains well below the high water mark of 1999, leaving many artists and their representatives still feeling like they are being shortchanged (for example, see Levine, 2016; Masnick, 2016; Seabrook, 2014). Yet it is likely that even if industry revenue surpasses previous levels, debates over who (e.g., artist, songwriter, label, publisher, distribution service) receives payment for what (e.g., song stream, video play, digital download, placement in commercial) will rage on.

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[10] In 2003, in addition to suing Napster, the RIAA went directly after consumers. Notably, the organization sued a 12-year old girl and a 71-year old woman who had been deemed serious criminal threats to the integrity of the music industry (Ross, 2016).

The current appropriation regime began with 1998's Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) in the U.S. This was a reaction to the rise of digital files, services, and hardware, as well as the digital rights management (DRM)—technologies intended to allow or block access to such files and hardware—that accompanied them. While the DMCA has had substantial consequences for the music industry (see Rosenthal & Metalitz, 2016 for a brief filed to the U.S. Copyright Office on behalf of many music industry players detailing the effects and shortcomings of the DMCA), it is particularly notable for two reasons. First, it has not been substantially changed or replaced since it was first signed in 1998. This means that all the technological changes that have taken place over the past two decades have not been directly addressed by copyright law, leaving plenty of gaps and loopholes in the current protections surrounding artists and the industry. Second, the DMCA's Section 512 provided "safe harbor provisions" for digital services and internet service providers. These provisions mean that services that rely on user-generated content like YouTube and SoundCloud, among many others, are not legally liable for copyright infringing material posted and made available on their platform: the people posting it are. The platforms are not liable as long as they have a method for the copyright owner to have the content removed, which, unsurprisingly, has its problems.[11] In an era of continued shrinking income and diminished royalty payments for artists—the result of a combination of plummeting physical sales, minimal subscription fees, and increasingly consolidated power in the hands of the major record labels—the ability of individual fans to put copyrighted copies of music online serves as salt in the wounds of artists and producers. The music industry would like YouTube to lose its "safe harbor," meaning it would need to monitor all content posted to the platform automatically (Flanagan, 2016). However, YouTube is owned by Google, whose massive lobbying efforts and very close relationship with the White House may render such cries difficult (Dayen, 2016). The rise of

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[11] YouTube has a "Content ID" system for automatically detecting copyrighted material that gets uploaded, provided the copyright owners have uploaded audio or video against which unlicensed uploads can be checked. Such a service is not required by law, and many in the music industry do not feel it is enough (Levine, 2016).

platforms reliant on user-generated and uploaded content, as well as internet radio services, online streaming, and the like has made an already byzantine system of royalty payments even more so.[12]

In previous eras, the major record labels were often blamed for appropriating too much of the revenue generated from album sales and other music-generated revenue (Denisoff, 1975, 1986; Sanjek & Sanjek, 1991).[13] However, while the labels have recently been outspoken about a "value gap" being exploited by some of the streaming services—especially YouTube (Flanagan, 2016; Levine, 2016)—such claims have been largely self-serving. To wit, they have ownership stakes in several of the major streaming services, notably Spotify and SoundCloud among several others (Greenberg, 2015), which were often bought at considerable discounts.[14] Further, due to opaque contracts, it remains unclear how much of the money that these services pay the labels ends up getting passed along to artists and songwriters (Singleton, 2015). So, while the industry has seen a geographic and economic flattening of the barriers to entry for artists and distribution, the few remaining major labels have found ways to entrench their power and revenue streams via discounted acquisitions on one hand and pleading insufficient royalty payments on the other.

Owing to these forces and the "value grab" by the many stakeholders that exist between artists and consumers, many artists now start building their personal management teams by hiring lawyers first. This helps ensure the protection of the rights to any songs artists create, increasing the likelihood that they can have a career as a musician. In an institutional configuration where services like YouTube and Spotify payments have taken the place of percentages of albums sold, this high volume, low margin model requires rights management

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[12] Visit http://futureofmusic.org/article/article/music-and-how-money-flows for a graphical depiction of how the many stakeholders and rights holders in the music industry receive payments for the different roles they play in the music creation, production, and distribution process.

[13] Terrestrial radio has never paid royalties to performers (only songwriters) under the pretense that radio airplay was sufficient advertising to "pay" for any use of a song. Emblematic of the many grounds on which the war for royalties is taking place, there has recently been a "Fair Play Fair Pay" bill put forward in the US House of Representatives to attempt remedy this lack of payment. The bill would equalize terrestrial and satellite radio royalties and pay fair market prices to songwriters and performers for songs used across all different platforms (Nadler, 2015).

[14] According to one report, a consortium of labels allegedly paid €8,800 in 2008 for an 18% share in Spotify (Jerräng, 2009).

to be air tight. For example, artists signed to a record label would need to have their songs played over 1.1 million times *per month* on Spotify (or 4.2 million streams on YouTube) to receive a minimum wage payout of $1,250 (from that service alone), based on a rough average of $0.0011 per stream actually making it to the artist. That number falls to 180,000 and 700,000 plays for an unsigned artist on Spotify and YouTube, respectively, as there are fewer middlemen to pay between the service and the artist.[15] If performers and songwriters cannot be correctly identified, that makes these already difficult numbers even more so. Not surprisingly, there are scores of musicians famous and unknown who have taken serious umbrage with the streaming services' payouts.[16]

The griping of the music industry's stakeholders across the entire value chain consistently comes back to two primary issues: inadequate copyright and royalty payment laws and the whack-a-mole relationship between consumers posting content and copyright owners trying to either take it down or get paid for it. Data and data management play a substantial role in both of these issues, and the need for a universal database that contains extensive copyright information and other metadata has not gone unnoticed, though early attempts to build one stalled out for the same reasons—concerns over proprietary rights, control of information, and privacy, as well as too many fractured stakeholder groups—that the need exists in the first place (Cooke, 2014).

Despite their audible cries to the contrary, labels and publishers have effectively re-consolidated their power. On one hand, they can complain about inefficiencies on the royalty collection side of their business and appear to be protecting the artists from the internet "giants" allegedly wielding too much power. At the same time, they can demand higher and

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[15] Data based on 2015 information, accessed in April, 2016 on this website:
 http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/how-much-do-music-artists-earn-online-2015-remix/.
[16] For a sampling of such complaints and calculations, see http://flavorwire.com/471802/musicians-drinking-the-spotify-haterade-the-collected-complaints and http://pitchfork.com/features/article/8993-the-cloud. In addition to complaints over payment, some big name musicians are pulling some or all of their material from Spotify (e.g., Taylor Swift, Adele, and Beyoncé Spotify) or offering exclusive releases to other services as a means of punishing Spotify for their meager payouts and/or trying to drive traffic and intrigue elsewhere.

higher payments for the use of songs—thus stifling competition and growth—and strike inconspicuous deals with many of these digital music companies to ostensibly ensure they (the labels) get paid, often to the detriment of the artists and services themselves! Despite artist complaints about Spotify's payouts, the company has yet to turn a profit, losing $206 million in 2015, with 85% of revenue being paid back to labels and publishers in royalties (Ingram, 2016). It is quite a demonstration of robust action (e.g., Padgett & Ansell, 1993) on behalf of the labels and has far-reaching implications for the industry. While some new organizations are trying to create transparency in the publishing and royalty process, and some artists are venturing away from the standard label-publisher distribution model, these are notable exceptions, not the new normal. However, they may point towards the industry's future.

*Classification System*

Some have justifiably referred to the music genre as having been "killed" (Robinson, 2016). With DJs creating mashups of classic rock and 90s-era Hip-Hop, music festivals expanding well beyond genre-specific artists, alt-country musicians covering pop icons' albums in their entirety, and indie folk musicians writing lyrics for Beyoncé, it would certainly seem that the notion of genres is eroding, if not disappearing altogether. And these are just examples from the music mainstream.

A generation of digital natives has now had the majority of recorded music freely available for most of its collective lifetime. With Napster and iTunes, there was no longer a need to search in a genre-specific area of a record store while worrying about being judged by other customers or the employees. Owing to this unfettered access, the geographic, cultural, and status-based boundaries that previously directed listeners' habits have become less relevant and perhaps even antiquated. Furthermore, with the fragmentation of the evaluative space, classification has now largely become a ground-up affair, where communities of consumers are "tagging" songs and artists, initiating an unprecedented level of granularity within

classification (Wijnberg, 2011). Beer (2013, p. 158) links the decentralizing effect of social media with the loosening of genre labels, commenting: "[s]ocial media are decoupling genre from these centralized forms of genre delineation and have turned genre into an increasingly self-organizing system. Genre may be more chaotic because it is less centralized in its formation and dissemination." These shifts influence both consumers, who no longer feel compelled to belong to a particular scene (e.g., Lena, 2012a), as well as producers, who can cite influences across the musical spectrum.

At the intersection of producers and consumers reside the tastemakers, who had previously been at least partially responsible for creating and protecting genre boundaries. They no longer have the power they once did; or at least that power has been distributed across many more tastemakers. There are two primary causes. First, the loss of some influence has coincided with the trend of surprise album releases, which began with Radiohead's self-released *In Rainbows* album in 2007 and continues to grow in popularity (Petridis, 2016). Unannounced releases afford critics less time to digest, process, and critique albums, giving more power to consumers and their friends. Second, the limitless access to friends', blogs', celebrities', and even your favorite bands' musical recommendations means that the tastemakers are no longer the most turned-to source for recommendations. This democratization of criticism has meant that the fortification of genre boundaries has become more diffuse, and in effect, weaker. One need look no further than the website everynoise.com—the data- and algorithm-generated map of the over 1450 artist genres available on Spotify (as of June, 2016)—to see just how amorphous the world of music classification has become. With so many genres, it is difficult to see how they can each represent "systems of orientations, expectations, and conventions that bind together industry, performers, critics, and fans in making what they identify as a distinctive sort of music," which is Lena's (2012a, p. 5) definition of genre.

Even the music charts have lost their esteemed position in guiding producers, consumers, and tastemakers. Though digital downloads and streams have been added to Billboard's calculation of chart position (Billboard.com, 2007, 2012), the market for music is so diffuse that it is difficult to gauge the meaning of a chart-topping song or album anymore. The top selling songs and albums rarely approach the sales numbers achieved by the biggest hits from the earlier eras of the industry, meaning that along with the charts' general exclusion of non-mainstream artists and genres, they have been relegated to reflecting the listening habits of a smaller, if mainstream, segment of the population than they previously represented.

Despite the erosion of the meaning of genres and the centrality of tastemakers, many music fans and services still use these classifications (e.g., alt-country, glam rock, acid jazz) to guide listeners, define artists' sound and style, and characterize the consumers who listen to them. For those familiar with a particular genre designation, these classifications still have meaning, and therefore suggest that while genre *boundaries* may be weakening—artists and consumers alike seem to freely sample from and participate across them—the meaning of the classifications themselves still carry weight, even if only as vestiges of a previous era (D. Silver, Lee, & Childress, 2016).

[Figure 2 here]

**The Continued Search for Authenticity in Music**

Again, why concern ourselves with authenticity? Perhaps because if authenticity tumbles, so too does music as a product we can identify with, produce with conviction, and consume with belief. Here it is worth recapitulating our line of argument: the separation of the spaces of production and consumption required an institutional response so that music could be commercialized. As we discuss in this section, the extent to which these institutions are able to accommodate the commodification of music (and other art forms) is dependent, to a large extent, on music being deemed authentic; without legitimate claims of authenticity, products

become interchangeable or disposable.[17] To that end, we suggest that authenticity is the gauge of the health of the underlying institutions governing a particular context: an inability to make attributions of authenticity renders institutions useless or obsolete.

Authenticity *requires* an institutionalized context in order for claims to be made about whether or not something belongs in the current context or not. Without boundaries to police or status hierarchies to reinforce (e.g., P. DiMaggio, 1982), there is no need for attributions of authenticity because to be deemed as inauthentic would be economically, socially, and artistically inconsequential. Thus, and in contrast to its etymological roots of "acting on one's own authority,"[18] we see authenticity as a productive and thoroughly relational concept premised on the socioeconomic institutions that hold sway at any given point in time and the social actors that try to maintain and upend them. Here the process of authentication reveals itself as an institutional practice, suturing together what would otherwise remain disparate sets of actors. Without the practice of authentication, the institutional work necessary to render music successful while becoming increasingly commoditized could not be accomplished, thereby significantly upending the commercial prospects of this burgeoning industry.

With that in mind, we turn to Figure 2, which shows the ways in which the practice of authentication connects (or fails to) the institutional realms in the music industry. We highlight our distinction between the "evaluative" and the "monetary" spaces in the music industry, in which the institutions "classification" and "appropriation" appear, respectively. The other three interceding institutions (production, consumption, and selection) comprise the actors who are actively mediating between the two institutional realms of "classification" and "appropriation,"[19] or put differently, between evaluation and monetization. Owing to our view

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[17] The distinction between hedonic and transcendent conceptions of value comes to mind (Podolny & Hill-Popper, 2004). The former refers to an object's value being determined in comparison to similar objects based on a set of features, while the latter refers to an object's value being determined individually and idiosyncratically, based largely "cognitive and emotional connection" (p. 95) with the object. Claims of authenticity indicate a transcendent valuation of songs or artists, allowing market participants to value songs more highly than they would if doing so via a hedonic decomposition of attributes.

[18] See http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=authentic

[19] Authenticity only applies to the mediating institutions because the institutions "classification" and "appropriation" cannot be judged independently of them in terms of their authenticity. Classification can only be deemed to be inauthentic in relation to

that authenticity is a thoroughly relational practice, it must manifest itself within the exchange relationships present in the market for music. And while "classification" and "appropriation" are indeed institutional realms, they do not in and of themselves constitute a collective set of actors. Thus, authenticity is a relational *institutional* practice, performed by three sets of actors: the producers, consumers and selectors of music. By highlighting these three sets of actors, we focus on how the "management" of authenticity, not unlike legitimacy, needs to be gained, maintained, and repaired (cf. Suchman, 1995). In doing so, we not only provide an account of how authenticity is institutionally embedded, but also how it is socially produced, rather than seen as an inherent quality of an object or person (see Wherry, 2006).

Crucially, the fact that authenticity cannot be reduced to some innate quality but needs to be constantly negotiated also renders it vulnerable to attacks that dispute its veracity. These attacks are especially prevalent during times of institutional change. As new technological regimes are being institutionalized, typically accompanied by a new set of products threatening the status quo, the associated authenticity claims and boundaries often become a target for contestation, dismissal, and, at times, ridicule. Adorno (1973, pp. 7–8) very cogently argued his case of technology disturbing the delicate nature of authenticity: "radio broadcasts of traditional music, music conceived in the categories of live performance, are grounded by the feeling of *as if*, of the inauthentic." While Adorno's analysis was not borne out of artists seeking personal gain, industry actors have often expressly targeted this Achilles' heel of music, especially because of its commercial imperative: if the practice by which music was being authenticated could be effectively questioned, the commercial interests accompanying could be significantly injured. As radio started to vie for the ear of the music lover, the pundits of the Tin Pan Alley Era openly questioned the merit of the new song: "radio music is

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who does the classifying (e.g., a selector); appropriation can only be deemed to be deemed to be *inauthentic* in relation who does the misappropriation.

abominable … years ago songs appealed to the heart. They had some dignity to them. Today they are mad to be howled and yowled" (Goldberg & Gershwin, 1930, p. 110).

If we examine the situation today, technology continues to have profound impact on the practice of authenticity, albeit in a different way. While authenticity is still a legitimate good, the actual process of authenticating music has become inherently more problematic in the Digital Era. Authenticity traditionally carried with it a sense of coherence around the music itself, but we are presently witnessing a deconstruction of the elements that constitute it in contemporary settings. It seems that, because of the advanced nature of its commodification, music has become an assemblage of its constituent parts (the song, the artist, the means of payment, etc.). If this is the case, each constituent part represents an opportunity—or creates a requirement—for authentication. The next section discusses how the practice of authentication features within the first of the three institutionalized sets of actors: the producers.

*Production*

*"Unlike other celebrities, musicians have an implicit duty to realness—ask why it's pop stars, over more famous red-carpet actors, who comprise eight of the ten most-followed Twitter accounts."* (Monroe, 2015)

Fans, desiring attachment to their favorite artists, may view authentic artists as more relatable and worthy of connection (Frazier, Gelman, Wilson, & Hood, 2009). Yet the diminishing influence of genres in the Digital Era seemingly implies a receding necessity to adhere to their specific and easily identifiable categories as a producer; stereotypical authenticity is certainly diminishing. One need only to catch a glance of the photos of the artists and bands comprising the current Billboard Country charts to see just how much the genre has evolved—and perhaps dissolved—since Peterson's *Creating Country Music* (1997). Country artists can now look like they would be more at home in a Greenwich Village coffee shop than somewhere in Alabama, ostensibly without incurring any substantial penalty. This of course stands in stark contrast to the era prior to the rise of digital files, when format-driven

radio, the "monoculture" of genre enthusiasts, and genre-based festivals like Woodstock wielded considerable power: musicians who ventured outside of their core genre were likely to be punished, or at least face a commercial penalty.

Without a strict "genre imperative" in place, to paraphrase Zuckerman (1999), attributions of producer authenticity can be based more on the personal views of the artist, especially when reinforced by the sound, lyrics, and ethos of artists' songs and production quality. This is what defines the practice of authentication in the Digital Era with regard to production, regardless of the variety of authenticity in question: an artist who is consistent across all aspects of their life. Take the following quote from an op-ed written in 2011 in *The Daily Telegraph* (UK) about megastar Adele:

> Everything about Adele is authentic because she is her own creation. She writes her own songs, and this is crucial to the emotion she invests in them. Her voice is fantastically appealing and compelling but it is a natural voice that she has developed in a highly personal way. [… ] She doesn't over-sing, she just delivers the lyric (her own lyrics) with the kind of timbre and tone that vibrates warmly in your ear. Interestingly, she was not even one of the singing stars of her own Brit School class. The first time I interviewed her, in 2008, she told me that she had only gone to one singing lesson at the school, and quickly decided not to do any more because 'they made me think about my voice too much' (McCormick, 2011).

Though nothing specific is mentioned about the genre of her music, all the (archetypical and prototypical) authenticity claims are implicitly made about Adele in relation to others who are less consistent than she is. She "writes her own songs" instead of having others do it for her; her voice is "natural" and developed in a "highly personal way" instead of being manufactured and over-produced; she has natural talent, as demonstrated by the lack of singing lessons. All of this suggests that she defies classification in the classic sense because she is completely her own creation, *sui generis*, and can be viewed as completely authentic because of her combination of natural born talent and the perceived consistency of that naturalness across everything she does. In the eyes of many she is, as Figure 2 suggests, the "real deal."

On the other hand, authenticity claims around artists writing their own songs have to be taken more seriously of late, owing to the rise of the "hit factory" song writers who have written scores of songs for many of the most popular artists over the past two decades (Seabrook, 2015). Though pop music was never as heavily policed for archetypical authenticity, other genres that placed greater emphasis on creative originality, like R&B and hip-hop, certainly did and continue to require artists to be writer-producers as well. How can artists be deemed authentic if they do not play at least a minimal role in creating their own songs? Will fans of these styles of music cease to care in a world with diminished genre boundaries and expansive sampling and borrowing of music? Music and popular culture critic Steven Hyden offers a potential answer in discussing a rap feud between hip-hop artists Drake and Meek Mill:

> What that was about for me was Drake's celebrity totally overwhelming Meek Mill's pleas to authenticity. In another era, Meek Mill accusing Drake of not writing his own songs would have been a much more powerful accusation. It would have been much more devastating for Drake. But *we live in an age where celebrity is the new authenticity*, and if you're famous enough, that justifies your place in the culture. This idea that maybe you're not famous but you're still considered important, that seems to be over. The only artists who critics take seriously and will discuss in depth are artists who are also hugely famous and successful. (Gordon, 2016, emphasis added)

Hyden's comments, made five years after the comments on Adele, reveal something about how far the Digital Era has come in terms of defining and attributing authenticity. From adherence to genre (stereotypical authenticity), to consistency and natural born talent (archetypical authenticity), to the mere size of an artist's popularity (prototypical authenticity?) is a long distance to travel in less than a decade. That anyone can view celebrity as a sufficient demonstration of authenticity means that adherence to genre norms or even archetypical authenticity are no longer necessary and certainly not as powerful as they used to be.

Shifting to the interaction between production and appropriation, it would be impossible to discuss authenticity in music without mentioning the notion of "selling-out," a derision often brought to the forefront of the music industry during the punk era of the 1970s, typically

applying to artists who either signed major label deals or changed their sound to become more popular. The notion of contact with—and cooptation by—market forces and money provided a reason for claims of contamination of art and/or *inauthenticity* (Fine, 2003; Velthuis, 2003). Being a sell-out or prioritizing "the abandonment of idealism for financial reward" (Hesmondhalgh, 1999, p. 44) was viewed by fans as a heinous betrayal of artistic integrity and the artist-fan relationship. Instead of fans being able to support their favorite artists for being anti-establishment and having the artistic integrity to remain "independent," once artists made career decisions to make more money, they were now the ones responsible for the appropriation of the value of music, not just the labels themselves.

The Digital Era witnessed some of the most flagrant breaches of authenticity in this regard. Popular metal band Metallica found out just how seriously fans took the notion of selling-out when they decided to sue P2P pioneer Napster in 2000 for copyright infringement. Though this was the beginning of the unravelling for Napster, which would be officially shutdown in 2002, Metallica was publicly skewered for being greedy. That they legally justified their position only made matters worse: having already had a successful 20-year career to that point—coincidentally due in large part to changing their sound to be "less metal" and more mainstream in the early 1990s—and being the vocal champions of illegal bootlegs of their own concerts, any attempts to get money from people sharing their songs was viewed as the height of market-driven behavior. Despite their continued popularity after the lawsuit, they are forever tainted by claims of selling-out and inauthenticity. More generally, the process of appropriation continues to be fraught with claims of injustice and inequality, as the institutions in the music industry remain heavily skewed towards the embedded corporate elite rather than the individual artist or band. Though the major record labels have always represented the corporate elite, the digital revolution further damaged any claims they had to authenticity as they maintained unjustifiably high prices in the face of substantially reduced production costs. How could they claim to be music lovers when it was now so blatantly all about the money?

However, the rise of essentially free music appears to be changing the frequency and severity of "sell-out" claims. Though not explicitly tied to the P2P sharing and free, ad-supported streaming, selling-out appears to be less serious to artists and consumers alike. "Sync," the licensing of music for TV shows, movies, and commercials, is seen as a perfectly legitimate way to make a living as a musician now, and musician appearances in commercials do not seem to carry the stigma they used to. Case in point: Iggy Pop, a punk icon for decades, has personally appeared in commercials for car insurance and licensed his songs for beer advertisements without much ostensible damage to his reputation (Dowling, 2009). Similarly, Dr. Dre, one of the original members of gangsta rap group NWA, created the headphones brand, "Beats by Dre," which was bought by Apple. If ever a "sell-out" label would have been earned, these are two prime cases. But there have not been particularly loud rumblings that significantly injured their authenticity. Further, the fact that many artists have featured as judges on televised talent shows like "X-factor," "the Voice," and "[insert your country]'s Got Talent," only seemed to naturalize the notion that music is an industry rather than principally a cultural form of expression that historically has a fraught relationship with the market.

Though some artists will still be derided for signing to major labels, for changing their sound to have a greater market appeal, or for appearing in commercials for Fortune 500 companies, the label "sell-out" is not thrown around as much as it once was and certainly does not have the stigmatizing power it once had. Moreover, even high earners, like Taylor Swift, who publicly decry the meager payments artists receive from Spotify, are largely immune to sell-out or inauthenticity claims—they may be made, but appear to carry minimal weight. Since appropriation in the music industry has shifted largely to copyright issues, consumers appear to be somewhat less preoccupied with artists who complain about lack of royalty payments than they were in the past.

Perhaps recognizing the economic plight of musicians these days—alongside the acknowledgement that many of the biggest earners in the music industry are putting out songs

they did not write, or are essentially their own small enterprises with diversified activities that go far beyond music alone—fans seem less inclined to invoke the term "sell-out." It appears that only die-hard fans are concerned with such authenticity, at least from the perspective of production. In summary, the practice of authentication is now reflected in the ability of producers to effectively activate and mobilize the institutions of classification and appropriation in their ongoing relationships with consumers and selectors.

*Consumption*

As fans have seen their access to music expand dramatically and have been handed numerous platforms through which they can enjoy music without the explicit constraints of genres, they seem to have gravitated towards becoming consumers rather than simply fans in the original sense of the word. Yet regardless of the designation, authenticity remains a concept that consumers care about deeply: while its importance for how they regard artists may be diminishing, authenticity *as a fan*—demonstrated largely by taste (see Hennion, 2007)—remains an important marker of social identity (Lonsdale & North, 2009; A. C. North & Hargreaves, 1999). By signaling their identities, fans show if they are (or are not) true to themselves, their backgrounds, or the expectations set by other fans, or if they are unique in their patterns of taste and fandom.

As the music industry rose in prominence, fans became increasingly dependent on music to craft their own identity (Frith, 1996). Beginning in the 1950s and becoming more central during the cultural upheaval of the 1960s, authenticity for fans, much like for musicians during this era, was dictated largely by genre (cf. Lena, 2012a). The "rules" for those wanting to be "real" fans went well beyond knowledge of bands and scenes to style, clothing, patterns of speech, and even included strong norms about what fans were supposed to *dislike* (Frith, 1996). Distinct genre-dictated expectations had to be met to be seen as a "true" fan. Casual

fans of an artist or a genre who did not look or sound the part, or were unable to name all the songs or bands in the appropriate scene were seen as inauthentic "poseurs."

But how does a fan signal their identity or the veracity of their fandom in an era of access over ownership and digital spaces over physical? If identity is central to the human experience of music and is, as Frith suggests (1996, pp. 111–12), created through experience and interaction rather than simple appreciation, then how are consumers of music able to establish authenticity? Music critic Peter Robinson offers a potential response: "Perhaps, in the age of endless ways to express yourself, it's also less necessary to define your identity…by clinging to genres. If you look at artists such as Lorde or Halsey, you see that while fans might once have bonded over those artists' musical styles, they now bond by congregating at the point of consumption" (Robinson, 2016). The discourse between fans that gives rise to demonstrations and attributions of authenticity that previously played out in social settings is also shifting to the digital realm.

While the "point of consumption" can be the live experience, social media platforms and digital music services provide a new point of consumption, one that is double-edged in terms of identity and authenticity. On one hand, these platforms provide a constant, real time, public stream of what any listener who opts to share is listening to, as well as an outlet for sharing recommendations and finding a like-minded "virtual community" of fans, regardless of geographic distance. Creating playlists similarly provides a combination of demonstration of tastes, an opportunity to build a community (however small), and has the *veil* of being social, by considering others tastes despite typically being carried out privately. However, digital platforms also add a considerable measure of physical and intangible distance between fans (or fans and artists), allowing for misrepresentations of tastes and style. Perhaps more concerning, the digital distance is also capable of creating feelings of cohesion and intimacy—central to the music appreciation and identity-forming process (Frith, 1996)—that may be illusory. This is especially true with YouTube and Twitter, whose videos and correspondence can create

feelings of proximity that can be completely fabricated, though it certainly does not have to be in all cases.

When fans and artists alike were less likely to straddle or sample from across genres, there were more cues that could be used to establish identity, in-group status, and cohesion (Bennett & Peterson, 2004; Berger & Heath, 2007). It is now as perfectly acceptable to like and recommend one song from 25 artists across a variety of styles as it is 25 songs from one artist or one particular sound. The rise of the mood-based playlist reinforces this destruction of genre-dictated self-presentation, and further permits opportunities for both authentic engagement with others (e.g., creating and sharing a playlist of dark, sad, brooding songs when feeling depressed) and completely manufactured engagement (a particularly upbeat playlist in the same situation). The combination of diminished genre boundaries, digital congregating places, and social media platforms has raised more questions than it has answered when it comes to consumers' identity and their perceived authenticity as "real" fans.

Consumers' navigation of authenticity also extends to their interaction with labels, copyright, and other elements of value appropriation. Prior to the Digital Era, to be a "true" fan required a demonstration of support by "buying in" to one's favorite bands. Fandom was, among other things, demonstrated via record collections: the depth and breadth of albums owned were key measures for demonstrating one's worth as a fan. Support in the form of purchasing albums, t-shirts, concert tickets, and other "merch" was a requisite. The notions of the die-hard fan and the groupie came to prominence in the 1960s to designate those people who devoted substantial quantities of time, money, and emotional energy to their favorite artists. To many, these were the people who both viewed themselves as the most authentic fans and the gatekeepers of who else was worthy of being considered an authentic fan. To some extent it was possible to purchase an identity as a legitimate fan, but financial commitment would only be sniffed at by those who saw themselves as the true fan. This is perhaps one of the reasons die-hard fans would be so offended by artists' "selling out" to a major label: if their

hard-earned money and support were now going through a wealthy, corporate middle man that was going to sap the artist's creative energy yet pay them anyway, the "true" fans' support was no longer necessary or deserved.

The rise of Napster problematized the notion of the authentic consumer. Was it OK to be sharing favorite band's music for free via The Pirate Bay? Did this constitute ripping off the artist, or was there some kind of mental jujitsu that could be done if concert tickets and other merchandise were purchased to make file sharing acceptable? Further, if fans felt that artists were becoming greedy themselves (like Metallica, discussed above), did they view file sharing as compensation or payback for feeling cheated by the inauthentic nature of their idols? And as music "got free" (Witt, 2015), how could a consumer really show their fandom? While record collections remain an indication of fandom, an activity like collecting vinyl is relegated to a small group of particularly dedicated consumers who demand authenticity in the face of increased commercialization in the industry (e.g., Hahl, 2016). Moreover, widespread access to nearly unlimited quantities of streamable music is lowering the level of engagement consumers seek with any one artist or band. With so much to explore, it is harder to capture anyone's attention for an extended period of time, though streaming has also been shown to increase the amount of time consumers' spend listening to their (newly discovered) favorite songs as repeat listening is less costly (Datta, Knox, & Bronnenberg, 2016). It is similarly difficult for fans to feel compelled to give their money, not to mention that precious resource—limited time—to any one artist.

The move from Napster to streaming has done little to abate the concerns surrounding consumers: money and time remain the most precious resources, though the latter does so from a different perspective, as most consumers appear to be comfortable with the royalty rates that artists are receiving from streaming and video services. However, as much time can now go towards direct engagement with artists on social media and other platforms as actually listening to artists' music. Though fraught with the same issues as fan-to-fan connection on

social media—false feelings of closeness, heavily curated self-presentation—having a real presence on social media is nearly essential now for artists because of fan engagement. Time-related concerns now extend beyond how little any one consumer has for any one artist to the artists themselves: expectations dictate that they must make themselves available to respond to fans. What is clear, however, is that the greater the artist engagement, the greater the consumer engagement. While it is incumbent upon artists to try to present their (now almost exclusively archetypical) authentic personae to their fans, it is simultaneously becoming more important for "true" fans to find ways to engage with their favorite artists. The purchase of fan identity now comes as much with time as with money. As it has for artists/producers, authenticity has become even more of a relational practice for consumers in their pursuit to express themselves, one predicated on the strength and manifestations of the underlying classificatory and monetary institutions.

*Selection*

The distinction between consumers and selectors is increasingly being blurred by the digitization and democratization of music. The selectors—the people responsible for distinguishing the proverbial musical signal from the noise and thus the authenticators *par excellence*—have ironically often found themselves in a fraught relationship with the music they evaluate. First, the increasing disjunction between the production and the consumption of music has rendered authenticity even more of an acute problem than it has been historically. Somdahl-Sands and Finn (2015) observe a "shattering" of authenticity in the Digital Era of music as the actual music is no longer being performed, but produced in the absence of an audience that could bear witness to its aura and thus bestow the work with authenticity. They argue that whereas the notion of recorded music still carries with it the promise of a faithful rendition of an actual live performance, an authentic performance "never actually occur[s]" in the Digital Era because the music is made without recourse to any listening audience (2015:

818). They argue that there is presently a "suspension of disbelief" as authenticity needs to be constantly *imagined.* However, it might very well be that the site of authentication has relocated, away from where the song was made to where and by whom the song is received. Thus, rather than the original understanding of authenticity, where music is authenticated when it is heard by an audience that is present during its performance, it seems that authenticity is now enacted retrospectively.

Songs' authenticity can now be reenacted by music communities by sharing them with their peers, effectively assembling the audience for the music post-hoc. In other words, the authenticity of a song is capable of now being experienced and produced within one's own (digital) community, as opposed to authentication being exclusively the provenance of the musician-audience interface. So while the practice of authentication is alive and well, it seems that there are currently processes at play that at times shift the balance of authentication from the producer to the consumers and selectors, indicating a deconstruction of authenticity by unhinging it from its original creator. It is important to note here that while Spotify's company curators are still significantly influencing the "consideration set" (cf. Zuckerman, 1999) as expert selectors, much of the subsequent authenticating is done by the consumers in *their* capacity as selectors.

Further, authentication in the Digital Era has set in motion the deconstruction of the evaluative space, parsing category-based classification like genres from ranking-based classifications like charts. A corollary of the development described above is that the authenticity of the song has largely become an affair for the decentralized masses rather than for a centralized "authenticator" who can speak from a position of authority. This marks a definite shift from previous eras of the music industry, where selectors became "specialists" to whom a certain, often genre-based expertise was ascribed and who, from this position, could attribute authenticity to a new song or artist. In this capacity, expert selectors were *the*

custodians of a genre and many of the further sub-stratifications of the genres could be directly attributed to their endorsement.

While there is still a role for expert selectors to be played in the Digital Era, this seems to be largely done by avant-garde bloggers, whose prescience is tested every time they endorse a new song. As the sentries guarding the gates of a genre, their evaluation and authentication of a new song is still largely genre-based. Genre-based authentication is thus perhaps most important for the blogosphere, where artists are judged as being "legitimate" or "manufactured" (as in the anonymous musician we mentioned above). An interesting case in point is Lana del Rey, whose manufactured persona was so reviled that it prompted outcry online (Lena, 2012b). Monroe (2015) comments:

> We're constantly flitting between worlds—fact and fiction, simulation and original, digital and physical—and the conflict is shaping us. Web commenters routinely dismiss pop artists like Lana Del Rey, rolling eyes at her manufactured narratives and basic stereotype fulfilment—but manufactured narratives and stereotype fulfilment are precisely what characterize modern people's lives.

Whereas the first trajectory of the process of evaluation is genre-based and the provenance of bloggers, the second trajectory is largely governed by play count; the two are increasingly separated within the evaluative space. Previously, genre-based and ranking-based classification typically went hand in hand (e.g., "dance charts," "pop charts"), save perhaps the most generic charts like the Hot 100. But now both types of classification are now largely disentangled. The play count is not only the dominant form of classification but also largely freed from the shackles of genre-based expectations and constraints (cf. Frith, 1996). The notion of celebrity as "the new authenticity" further reinforces this point: a song is not necessarily "rock" or "country," it is "a smash hit." And the rise of the algorithm-generated playlist is testimony to this: an algorithm can easily count the number of plays and subsequently add it to a curated playlist. As a result, process of selection itself has less of a

*prescriptive* than a *descriptive* function. Play count, just like artist popularity, is now more important as an indicator of quality than anything else.[20]

A final aspect of the deconstruction of authenticity is the increasing schism between the product and the artist themselves. They are increasingly becoming decoupled in the Digital Era. This happens to such an extent that an artist can be authenticated in spite of his music. Monroe (2015) notes that "anonymity allures modern musicians who seek it. Some, like the elusive MF DOOM, claim personality has overshadowed good music; Sia hides her face to avoid intrusion, Gorillaz invent new personas entirely, and countless producers, perhaps pining for the heyday of white-label culture, turn their noses at digital overshare." In such circumstances, authentication must occur in the absence of the artist, or via the belief that an artist obscuring their identity is a marker of authenticity in and of itself.

This authentication of the person also extends to the realm of the selectors: what is a selector if not someone who, through their bona fide capacity, selects and endorses songs on their merit (Glynn & Lounsbury, 2005)? Being paid to endorse a product becomes problematic since it subtracts from the "neutral" and "objective" position of the selector (Mol & Wijnberg, 2007). And while the authenticity of the selectors has always been an area of scrutiny, the nature of it seems to shift from the actual person doing the selection to the platform where selection takes place. Although Variety Magazine branded it as "payment evil" back in 1915, accepting a bribe (payola) for endorsing a hit was not, per se, an illegal act in the Tin Pan Alley Era. What was clear, however, was that the inauthenticity of payola was tied to the person accepting the bribe. However, selection is now increasingly being done either implicitly via curated playlists or via non-human actors such as algorithms. The configuration raises the possibility of what Caves (2000) labeled as "capitalized payola," where the gatekeepers to the music industry—now the likes of Spotify—are also the ones that control the evaluative space.

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[20] As is the case with many of the claims in this chapter, there is a difference in this regard between mainstream and avant-garde or underground music.

How is one to determine the authenticity of any piece of the production or consumption process with such an opaque configuration? The answer again lies in the relationship between the industry's institutions: while doing institutional work, selectors now determine songs' and artists' value vis-à-vis the relations between the reigning production, consumption, classification, and appropriation regimes.

## Conclusion and Future Concerns

*"A collection of physical objects loses its relevance as an identity marker and is being replaced by a list of tracks listened to during the last hour, week or year. Experience replaces ownership"* (Wikström, 2012)

The Digital Era of the industry reconfigured and altered the commodification of music with unprecedented consequences for the process of authentication as an institutional practice. Technology might *prima facie* provide an easy avenue for artists to reach a wide audience as well as an embarrassment of musical riches for consumers, but managing authenticity in a digital world is proving increasingly challenging for both sides of the music marketplace. The Digital Era, with its incorporeal format for music delivery, diminished genre boundaries, and social media platforms seems to have raised more questions than it has answered when it comes to producers', consumers', and selectors' perceived authenticity. The negotiation among social actors charged with establishing (or discrediting) the authenticity of an artist or a fan has changed its tenor, but is no less present.

With these developments in mind, what do the changes in the institutional configuration of the music industry imply for the (near) future of music, and what will be the consequences of those changes? The institutional changes have created three interconnected primary issues that will face the industry in the coming years. First, appropriation of (economic) value is once again at the forefront, with nearly all the stakeholders in the industry claiming that they are not getting enough. Artists, labels, streaming services, and startups all believe that they have a legitimate stake in the money generated by the industry, whether from fans, advertising, or

other means. Consumers, it would seem, are the only ones presently content with the cost of music. Likewise, there is increased concern over rights and ownership that provide legitimate claims to appropriation. As music can now be posted and accessed from nearly anywhere, determining who should receive credit and payment for each time a song gets played is becoming a problem that feels almost too big to tackle. Spotify boasts over 30 million songs, representing a large portion of the identifiable music available, but what about poorly labeled music or tracks for which the artists and songwriters are difficult to identify? There is a dire need for a universal database tracking the rights information and metadata about every song. And while the technology already exists, along with a small but growing movement towards blockchain technology (see J. Silver, 2016), the fractured factions within the industry likely mean this will not be a reality for the next decade or so (Dredge, 2016). Any changes to rights information will, of course, also have a substantial impact on the appropriation of value in the industry as well as on the producers and platforms that make music available.

Second, there is the scarcity of scarcity, with implications for each of the music industry's institutions. No longer are there reasonable limits on the quantity of available music, new bands to explore, playlists to listen to, YouTube videos to watch, and fans to meet. Thus a new problem presents itself in the Digital Era: how can consumers and producers of music find themselves and each other in this unbridled world of digital music, which has grown exponentially to include anything from previously unreleased material by pop stars and back catalogues of evergreens to the music by aspiring artists and amateurs? With this clear shift away from traditional notions of commodification typically associated with the best-seller economy, the dilemma of exploded choice places the onus directly on selection systems, which must make sense of this new, effectively limitless marketplace. And once again, how can value be determined and its rightful owner identified amidst this sea of products and producers?

Third, rather being a coherent entity where its aspects are assembled in the same space and time, authenticity—in all its multi-faceted nature—seems to dissolve into its constituent

parts with unfettered adoption of digital social media. While authenticity was traditionally seen as "true to self" or "true to style," we see a further splintering of authenticity in the Digital Era. As a result, the commodification of music is being deconstructed into its constituent parts (e.g., the song, the musician, the payment), each requiring its own institutional practice of authentication. This assemblage of authenticity can ostensibly absorb more contradictions, as its multifarious nature is not necessarily problematic. We have identified "zones of authentication," the spaces where the relations between the institutions holding the music industry are assembled and where the constituent parts of a song, an artist, a fan, or all three together can be credentialed largely in isolation. Songs that are authentic in the way they are produced could be inauthentically consumed and vice-versa. Coherence or consistency across the "zones of authentication" no longer appears to be a requirement. In fact, a surge of authentic inauthenticity seems afoot: with several of the institutions (e.g. genres) seemingly depleted, it is no longer necessary to belong. Increasingly, consumers—like artists before them—are breaking away from the institutions that reigned during earlier eras of the music industry and are actively avoiding being authenticated by external authenticators. Some might even go as far as to claim, as did Bruce Springsteen,[21] that we are living in a "post-authentic world" where we alone can speak to and assign our own authenticity, a development that could be seen as the embrace of an anti-authenticity. Alas, it remains to be seen if here too institutional practices are quick to catch up to render these lines of flight authentic, as they have done many times before. A case in point: alternative music, a breakaway form of music or an "oppositional genre," quickly began forming its own norms and cognitive structures to be authenticated (Hesmondhalgh, 1999).

We began this chapter by suggesting that an exploration of the institutional configurations of the music industry would provide context for better understanding the role that the practice of authentication plays in reinforcing the connections between the institutions.

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[21] http://speakola.com/arts/bruce-springsteen-keynote-sxsw-2012

It is fair to say, we still have barely scratched the surface of the music industry, which is practically unmatched in its complexity. However, given the evolving institutional configuration and dynamics of the industry, we believe it is fertile ground for renewed sociological, institutional, and managerial analyses. More than any other industry, save perhaps the news media, it has been dramatically disrupted by technology and provides plenty of compelling questions and takeaways for anyone interested in the impact of digital transformation. That authenticity remains a key driver in this particular creative industry comes as no surprise: as products lose physical form, social media platforms provide the illusion of closeness, and technology further alienates people from the creation and appreciation of works of art, we will continue to seek authentic individuals and experiences. This, too, will not be unique to the music industry.

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**Figures**

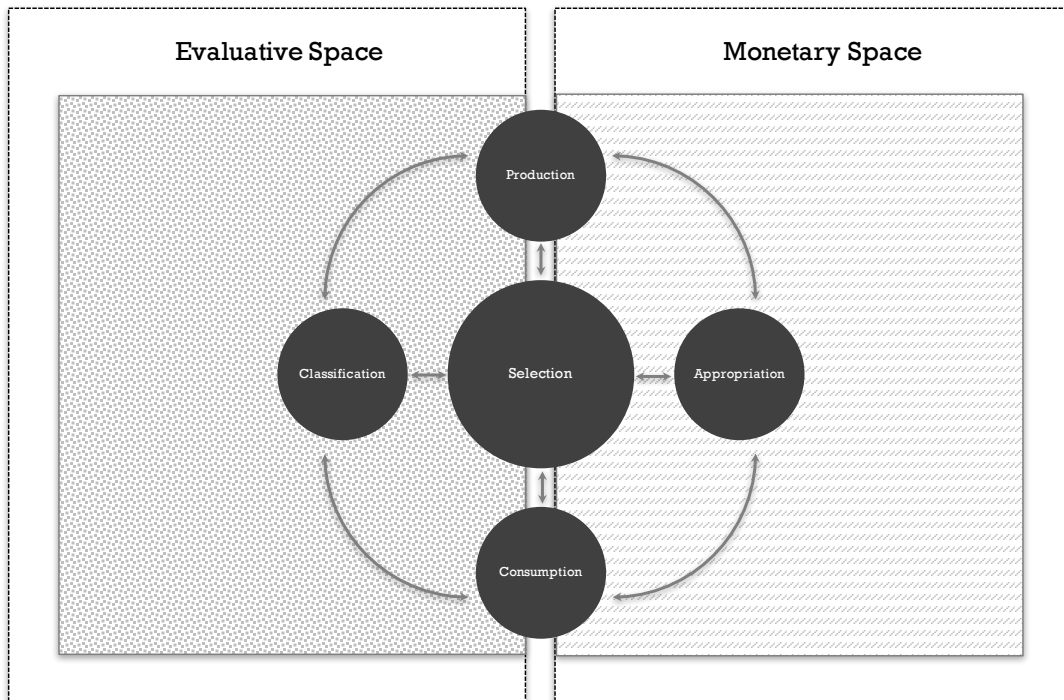**Figure 1.** Institutional configuration of the music industry



**Figure 2.** Authenticity vis-à-vis the institutional configuration of the music industry