



21st century artist contracts



JEFF LIEBENSON

Founder of Liebenson Law (New York)
and president of IAEL (International
Association of Entertainment Lawyers)

What are the biggest changes affecting contracts?

The biggest change actually happened a few years ago – the 360 deal. It came about because of the changing economics of the recorded music industry. Sales of recorded music are down and the labels continue to have high costs to market and promote records; they now look to other revenue streams to make up the difference.

How are artist advances changing as a result?

It certainly opens up the opportunity for artists to ask for more advances because they are giving over more rights. At the same time, the record industry is in a position to argue that it doesn't have the money it used to have and that has a downward pressure on advances. The big difference is that, if there is competition for an act, we still see the high advances we used to see.

How is the architecture of contracts being affected?

The majors still measure contracts generally by album. They obviously prefer the longest

term they can get, but they are increasingly open to shorter deals. This is for competitive reasons and because they are increasingly realising there aren't many artists who have commercial viability over the course of many recordings. Taking that into account with the competitive pressures in the market and the ability of artists to go on their own, we are seeing the labels being less active about long-term contracts.

Is the rise of EDM in the US bringing forward a new generation of artists who are more self-sufficient and therefore have more power at the negotiating stage?

The EDM environment is one where we have a whole different type of contractual process. The artists tend to become very economically viable without the assistance of a major record label. So they also have more leverage in the negotiations. There are sometimes certain aspects that they want from a major label – like radio promotion or worldwide distribution – but the artist starts the discussion from a position of strength. In EDM, the artists they are dealing with tend to have typically very short-term contracts and the industry is evolving very quickly so things are relatively non-precedential. It's fast-moving, short-term and one highlight of that industry is that there are a lot of creative branding contracts. It's not just a

Music law taps into the future

DISRUPTION IS EVERYWHERE IN MUSIC – THROUGH TECHNOLOGY, PRODUCTION, MARKETING AND CONSUMPTION. AS ALL THE OLD CERTAINTIES GO OUT THE WINDOW, ARTIST CONTRACTS – THE THREAD RUNNING THROUGH MOST OF THIS – HAVE TO CHANGE. WE SPEAK TO THOSE AT THE LEGAL FOREFRONT TO ASK WHAT HAS CHANGED BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT STILL NEEDS TO CHANGE.

recording agreement: it's a relationship with a branding organisation that may or may not include the use of recordings to support the brand.

What are the contractual implications for labels that have stakes in services like Spotify and SoundCloud? (Universal Music Group revealed it will make \$409m from its 13% stake in Beats as we were going to press.)

There is a lot of controversy about if artists are adequately compensated via the royalties they receive when record labels receive both royalties and equity. The record industry has always been adamant about not sharing in the equity they have obtained from digital services. It is only artists at the highest level who really have the leverage to assert a claim on this. I suspect the labels will find other ways to satisfy the demands of these artists rather than opening the Pandora's box of granting them a share of their equity.

How are older contracts being recalibrated for the digital age?

Things like how to treat streaming royalties had been addressed in the contracts the labels have had for 10 years or more. But the older contracts signed before this was envisioned continue to come up. We have had several litigations in the US involving

the Allman Brothers (pictured above) and other artists where they were in a position to allege they should receive 50% of streaming revenue because it was a licensing arrangement rather than a typical artist royalty rate payment.

The other big issue that will increasingly be coming to a head is whether or not sound recordings are works for hire under US law and, if not, if acts have a right to terminate their assignment of copyrights in them. Many artists are bringing this issue to the labels who are reluctant to have a major court battle that would set a precedent applicable to all. It is an issue that can open a negotiation with a label. The labels in general wish to keep the artists on their rosters and will find some negotiated way to make that happen.

Where are things moving?

It's fair to say that all the old assumptions are up for grabs now because the economics underlying all these contracts is shifting so much. That is why we are seeing labels being open to short-term deals when they weren't before. They try very much to hold the line on all the basic principles of the deal and yet they are forced to think more flexibly. Artists do have other options these days so that results in all the old assumptions being up for grabs.

TAHIR BASHEER

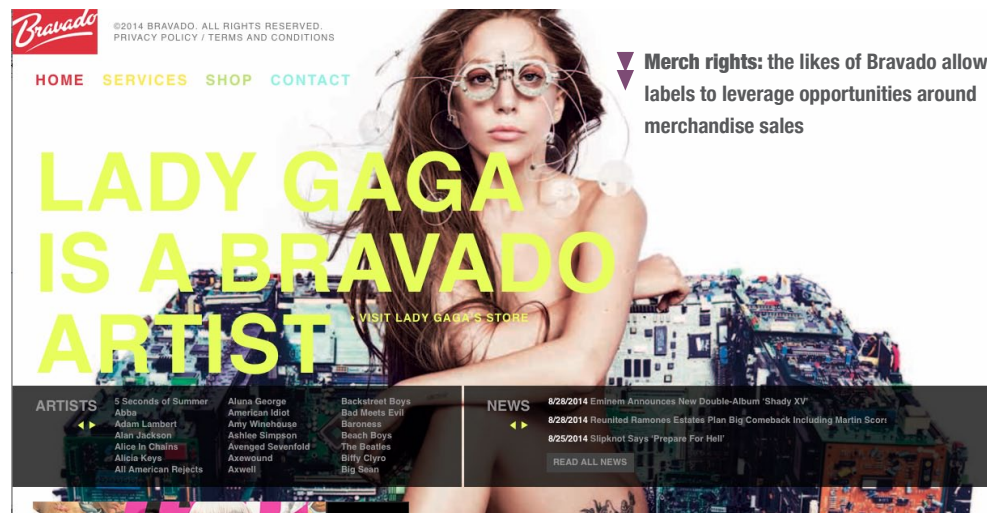
Partner in the Digital Media, Music, Fashion & Brands groups at Sheridans

What are the big contractual changes you are seeing?

You'll still see some deals where people are talking about the formats no one buys any more. You see all this time and effort being spent negotiating things around DVDs, for example. In reality they should be spending more time negotiating other areas like digital streaming and ancillary income, which is really where a lot of those contracts have changed.

How have contracts changed over the course of your career?

There is more emphasis on not just recorded rights income – which sounds obvious. Contracts will now try and get merchandising rights wholesale and will cross-refer that work to their in-house merchandise team – so think Universal and Bravado. Or they'll want some sort of first matching rights of negotiations around things like merchandise or some exclusivity around some special edition ranges. What they are trying to do in layman's terms is maximise the opportunities to try and



▼ **Merch rights:** the likes of Bravado allow labels to leverage opportunities around merchandise sales

secure deals around something like merchandise. Secondly, you'd think streaming and digital rights would be industry standard by now but they are not really. The indies still have more of a 'share the net receipts' approach and the majors still treat it as a royalty stream and see how far they can go on that.

Is transparency a key component here?

There was always a cry that people didn't have enough information on accounting. Now it's gone completely the other way with cries that we have too much information [regarding granular streaming data]. The only way they [labels] can deal

with, say, Google Play accounting is by having the software in place to look at all those micro-transactions and work out what is happening.

With labels having equity in Spotify and SoundCloud, should acts get a cut?

You could almost see

We have a big push to incorporate data ownership in our deals here because that is where the value is"

labels ending up as VCs [in the future] as they are not just investing with money but also with music.

But the music is only partly theirs. If you are going to have that type of approach where labels take equity, why aren't they acting like fund managers for the artists? So they can invest in certain services by taking equity and providing them with music. For the return they get they can take a commission and distribute it to all their fund participants – i.e. the artists.

No one talks in those terms, but in my head that is how it should be. Under your talent deals you try and capture that; but the problem you have got is, for an individual artist to try and get those sorts of provisions through, it is very difficult – even if you are a superstar artist. You need an unionised approach where artists gather together and set up an equity fund with the labels.

What is the worst thing you've seen in an artist contract in recent years?

I stopped a deal recently. For me the inconceivable point was that if they [the label] were not going to pay anything [in advance] they could not have all these rights. We will give you some limited rights if you pay something up front or we'll give you a target whereby, after year one, we will have to have made X amount and if we haven't we can break away. They wouldn't go for the target that I thought was far more generous than we should have been in the first place.

What we are seeing getting traction is artists doing JV deals with labels. They both put money in and work on it like they are partners to share the risk and the reward.

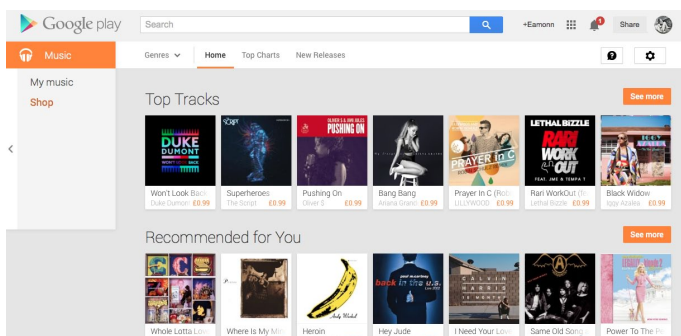
How valid is measuring out the contract in album terms?

For an act whose music lends itself to syncs, the commitment could be a number of film soundtracks, for example. The concept of the album is less powerful.

But you still have to bunch up time periods. It is still being used [as a measurement] but often only as a suggestion of the 8-10 tracks we want from you as this period of time. Whether or not it gets released as an album is not that relevant any more – it's the commitment of the tracks themselves.

How key is data?

It is really important for artists. So in contracts you have to clarify who owns that data and who controls it digitally, what happens to it after the end of the deal and who takes it away. That is something too many artist representatives are not looking at closely enough. We have a big push to incorporate that in our deals here because that is where the value is.





Ylvis - The Fox (What Does The Fox Say?) [Official music video HD]

TVNorae

ROBERT HORSFALL

Owner/partner, Sound Advice

SONIA DIWAN

Owner/partner, Sound Advice

You did the deal for Ylvis' 'The Fox (What Does The Fox Say?)'. What do viral hits tell us about modern contracts?

RH: That could have become the most unadulterated bidding war of all time because it went so huge, so quickly. There was already a deal in place in Norway. The more recent one is Anders Nilsen's 'Salsa Tequila'. That got everybody excited. That is a different thing. That is just chasing a hit. That's not chasing an act. Anders Nilsen was a one-single deal with no options. Ylvis

was a one-single deal.

Any major label is more preoccupied with signing artists rather than one-off hits. All major labels want album artists. You create blockbusters from albums. One-off singles are a law unto themselves. There is a dynamic to the deal but they are not our bread and butter.

How are contracts being measured today?

RH: The standard 10 or 15 years ago was for six albums. It became five. It is still five but there is scope to come down to four. I have said if you are offering a partnership deal or a 360 deal, fine – but that should be a three-album deal. Very occasionally you'll get a three-album deal. I got it recently with

something that was in competition and it is a big point for the artist that we are taking less money to keep it down to a three-album deal.

SD: The deal terms are still driven by what the artist wants in return. Whether that's by way of certain advances, marketing commitment or anything of that nature. It is still all driven by that.

Is ownership of the masters a new battleground?

RH: Just occasionally you'll see an artist get their copyrights back on an unqualified basis after 10, 15 or 20 years. I don't think you would have seen that 10 or 15 years ago. Very rarely would you have seen that.

I don't think the artist community is ever going to win the battle to get 50/50 on streaming"

SD: I would now put that on the agenda in a way that, 10 or 15 years ago, I wouldn't have.

RH: It can absolutely go on the shopping list without you being laughed at.

How are streaming royalties being decided in contracts?

RH: We here, as pragmatic artist lawyers in our normal day-to-day work – so not in a bidding war – look for between 25% and 35% of streaming income.

I don't think the artist community is ever going to win the battle to get 50/50 on streaming. If the MMF or FAC try to ensure it, they will singularly fail. They are not going to get 50/50 and I don't think they would ever convince the legislators

to introduce a law that imposed 50/50 as the legislators would have to look at the commerce behind the business. If you are getting 35% of streaming income you should be more than content. If you are getting 20% or less, you have the right to be unhappy.

If you want the lion's share of streaming income, set up your own label. And good luck. [As a new artist] where are you going to get the money and muscle from to effectively run your own label? We have heard it from the horse's mouth – the major labels would walk away from a deal, I think, if you pushed for 50% of streaming.

SD: They can't set that precedent.

What is the future of the 360 deal?

RH: I'd be surprised if there was any new artist deal without some form of 360 participation. There are all sorts of caveats and cut-offs. We had one deal recently where the label only earned on live for as long as the artist was unrecouped. That has a commercial logic to it. When an act is recouped, that means the label is enjoying super-profits.

We have heard of artists in the past few years paying over six figures to labels in live participation. We've not had the artist or manager spitting blood when they have counted up what they pay to the label. It's what I call a nice problem to have.

That is the ethos of the 360 deal. The ideology behind it is win/win. I have always said, fine, let's have that win/win mentality, but the thing the label needs to do in return is to give a little bit more in record profits to the artist.

The minute you ask for an advance, you are going into a royalty discussion at a disadvantage because you have taken a big advance.

CLIFF FLUET

Partner, Lewis Silkin

If you take a high advance and a low royalty, you'll never see another cheque again"

What are the biggest changes to contract law you have seen in your career?

When I started, it was a post-George Michael, post-Holly Johnson world where one had an attitude of church and state about recording rights and publishing rights. Things like touring were completely and solely the preserve of the artist. That suited the record companies just fine as things were so profitable that it meant certain things were just beyond conversation.

What was probably the most expensive part of the process – the recording and promotion and so on – was also the most profitable. Now it remains among the most expensive but it is one of the least profitable elements. So they [labels] have recalibrated the rights to look at these 360 deals, ancillary income and other forms of revenue.

What are the biggest sticking points?

In my years at record companies I was surprised that no one ever asked me on an 18% royalty deal, less packaging, where the other 82% went. No one ever asked. You get to a position where the numbers are just accepted and they become de rigueur. It is more sensible that the streaming royalty rate and the physical royalty rate are different. But the really important points

High stakes: labels have stakes in services like Beats and SoundCloud, but will artists share in this?

of contention have to be around breakage. What happens in relation to breakage? Record companies get settlements from pirate services. What happens to that money? Streaming services pay massive advances in order to get a licence to trade. They could go under with no strings applicable because they never take off. What happens to that advance?

If labels have equity in music services, how will that affect artists?

Beats is the argument here. It exited before it did anything. Even before all its streams were properly counted, it was sold for

\$3bn. No one knows what SoundCloud has streamed to date.

What makes you lunge for the red pen when reading a contract?

The contracts I have seen that made my head fall off have not been so much acting for artists as acting for services and platforms. Some of the clauses I am seeing from the rightsholders right now have made me hit the button.

It is quite clear that they [the labels] see that as the golden goose that they can slaughter rather than the artists right now. Almost on a weekly basis you see people

asking for 80% of revenue. All of these things are coming out of services for things like encoding costs, marketing contributions and so on. Those things

are being ramped up day by day.

Also, for as long as your advance recoups against your royalty, it is always an insanity. If you take a high advance and a low royalty, you'll never see another cheque again.

What is the next battleground in artist contracts?

Brand income is going to become a bigger battleground going forward. Everyone is thinking about touring and things like that; but in terms of pure profit, branding comes way, way up there. That will be the big one.

Labels taking a cut of live is not the headline it was 10 years ago. But if the act does a like gig for F1 or they read about the act playing a show for a Saudi prince and getting £1m for one night, that, I think, is going to get a bit more tasty.

If you look back in time at agreements, you'd get 20% on PPD less 25% packaging, so you'd get 15% on PPD. What is PPD [today]? Then 50/50 on all other receipts? That is not going to work [now] so it has to change. Many heritage agreements and many catalogue agreements are still subject to those terms.

Being as even-handed as I can be, at the end of the day we still do not have any artists of any measure having been launched without the involvement of a major label or an independent label. For all of the investment funds, all of the brands and all of the alternative models, not a one has delivered [a big act]. If you want to be a hit, you've got to sign one of these things.

The market isn't quite as dynamic as we'd all love to think. What we need to do is get to a more pragmatic view of what value looks like and how it works. The more deals that are quite commercial and less about sacred cows the better. Will mid-selling artists get a proper share of all the revenue that should have been attributed to them? I don't know. :)

#GamerGate and toxic commenting culture

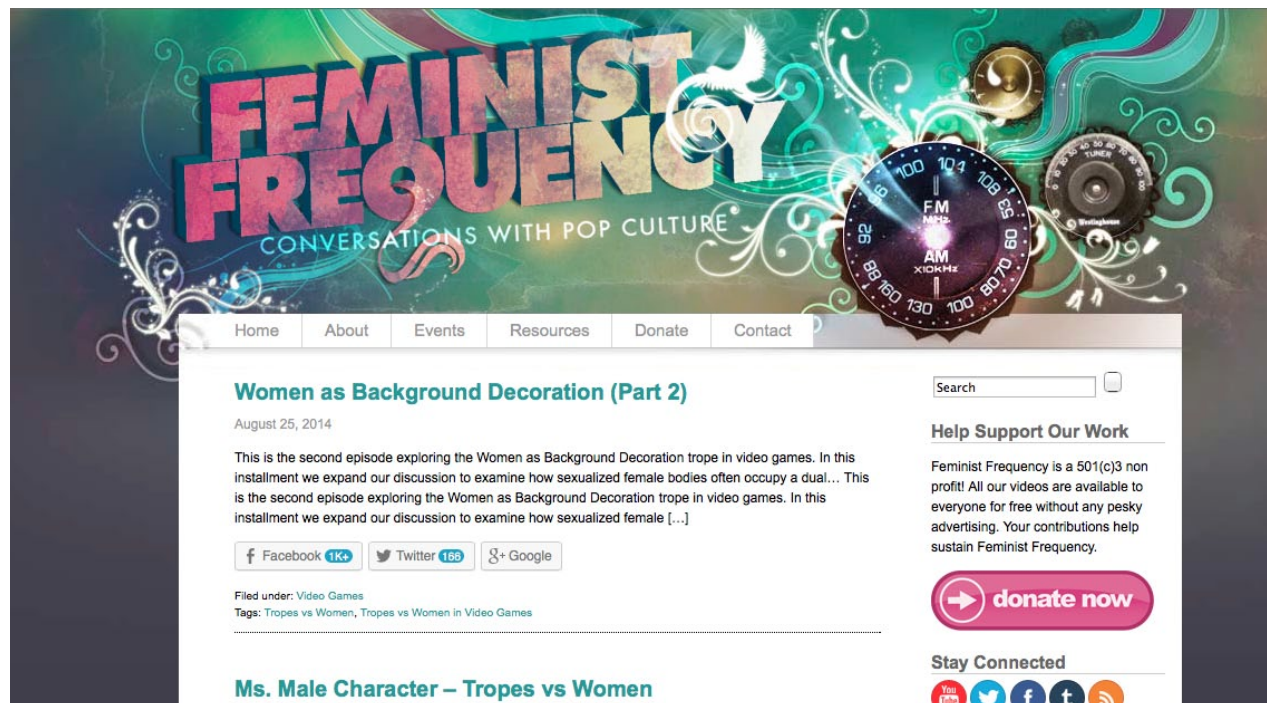
The traditional stereotype of gamers as socially awkward, angry and misogynistic young men is wrong. It's been wrong for a long time. These people are a tiny (if very vocal) minority of the overall gaming population, yet events in recent weeks have shown that they can still lurch into the limelight.

Have you heard of #GamerGate – yes, every online controversy comes in the form of a hashtag with a “gate” suffix nowadays – yet? It's a dispiritingly vicious war of words between journalists, feminists and gamers on one side, and trolls (amateur and professional alike) and other gamers on the other.

There are two specific flashpoints: first, a spiteful blog post by the former boyfriend of an independent games developer, Zoe Quinn, making allegations about her private life, including the claim that she slept with at least one games journalist.

Second, the latest in a series of videos by critic and journalist Anita Sarkeesian called Tropes Vs Women In Video Games, which lays bare sexism in games culture by rounding up some of the glaring female stereotypes within them.

Quinn's situation has sparked a debate about closeness between journalists and games developers, notably how/whether it should be disclosed – going beyond romantic liaisons to friendships and, in



way about comments culture. He has disabled comments on all his YouTube videos, complaining that his fans are being squeezed out by spammers and haters.

This, despite YouTube controversially shaking up its comments system last year, when PewDiePie was complaining about the same things. The changes appear to have not worked, but the bigger picture is the toxic commenting culture around games.

And not just games. Reading the YouTube comments under any music video by a prominent female artist is an unsavoury insight into online misogyny, as is scrolling through the pornspam

the cases of sites like Patreon, journalists writing about developers who they've also helped crowdfund.

This being the internet, though, that discussion (as well as moderate questioning of Sarkeesian's work) has been thoroughly drowned out by a wave of abuse, up to and including rape and death threats against both women and their families.

It's a particularly severe version of the avalanche of negative comments that appear whenever a woman writes about feminist issues in relation to games – or, all too often, when a woman writes about

games full stop. It is also proof of Lewis' Law in effect – namely that “the comments on any article about feminism justify feminism”.

But the harassment of Quinn and Sarkeesian has sparked the most urgent debate yet within the games industry about the toxic comments culture around what's now a mainstream entertainment industry as well as an artform, yet is also often still mired in the prejudices of a tiny section of its audience.

The biggest star on YouTube, gamer PewDiePie, is complaining in a different

being bulk-pasted into comment threads on Facebook pages for stars like Shakira.

Lauren Mayberry from UK band Chvrches addressed the direct abuse she receives in an article last year, too: “Why should I cry about this?” she asked. “Why should I feel violated, uncomfortable and demeaned? Why should we all keep quiet?”

It might be tempting for music industry people to look at the #GamerGate controversy as specifically a games thing, but there may be a lot for the two industries to learn together about how to tackle these issues. :)

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APPLICATION DEADLINE

Anyone is welcome to apply – admission is free and the deadline is 5th September. Please email applications@musically.com for the award(s) you want to apply for and you will be sent a short application form to be completed and returned. For more information or sponsorship opportunities, contact: anthony@musically.com Our dedicated website has more detail on the awards and how to apply: www.musicallydigitalmusicawards.com

Pinboard » Deals

UNIVERSAL



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

Universal Music Group has confirmed that it will receive \$409m for its 13% stake in Beats following the company's \$3bn acquisition by Apple earlier this year.

KKBOX



Taiwanese music service KKBOX has secured a \$104m funding round from Singapore GIC, the investment arm of the Singaporean government, to underwrite its expansion in Australasia.

8TRACKS



Playlists-based music service 8tracks has raised \$1.28m in new funding. The company is not, for now, saying what that money will be used for until its current funding round closes.

TWITCH



Amazon has acquired gaming platform Twitch for \$970m - beating Google to close the deal. Twitch is increasingly working with musicians in their marketing.

SEATGEEK



Ticketing search company SeatGeek has secured \$35m in a Series B funding round led by Accel Capital.

YG ENTERTAINMENT



Fashion company Louis Vuitton is investing \$80m in YG Entertainment Inc., the K-pop record label and talent agency.

Tweets



#music
musings



@tsingham

Alison Wenham pulling no punches last night: 'If

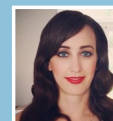
major labels controlled the entirety of music, I'd probably look into Dignitas.' #aimawards



@dubber

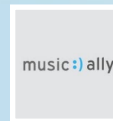
Changing the font in which I write emails has

considerably brightened my mood today. The next time you hear from me it'll be in Avenir Next.



@lucyblair:

Mashable reporting on Brangelina's wedding before even the Mail Online... yet another kiss of death for its ever-waning credibility



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NEW SERVICE LISNR



What is it?

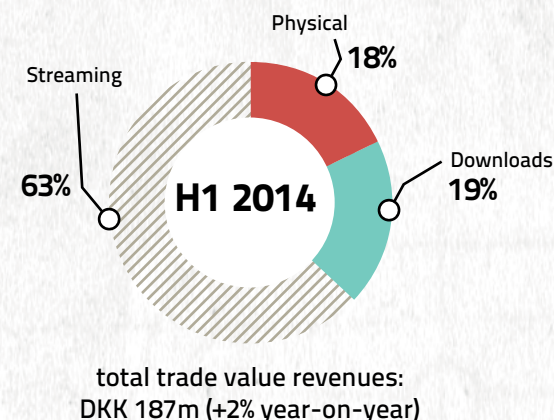
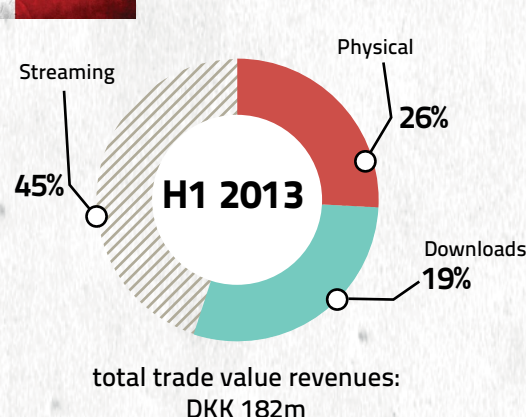
We're rapidly tiring of the "It's the X of Y" pitch for startups: the Airbnb of pets, the Uber of shopping and so on. So we had to stifle a heavy facepalm at the sight of US startup Lisnr being billed as "the Flipboard for music" – especially as that quote came from its own CEO (pictured) rather than an over-excited tech journalist. His pitch needs a bit of work to sound meaningful, too: "Basically, it can take a bunch of different data points or activity you're doing and it automates specific pieces of content that might make sense for that particular moment."

So it's an app, with location-based features, promising that it "rewards you for listening with content". Despite a deal to run Shakira's official app and investment from Jay-Z's Roc Nation, the company's conversion rate – 100k active users from 6m download so far – is also cause for concern.

» Stats



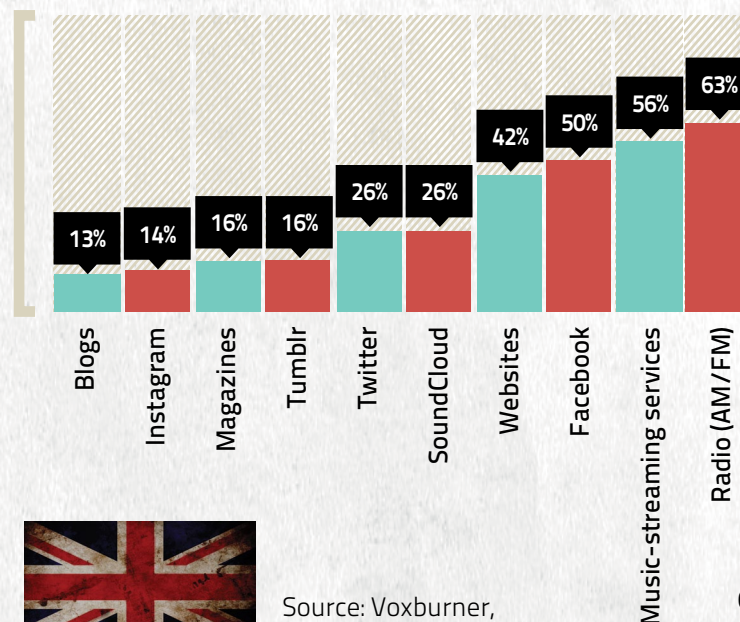
DENMARK: HALF-YEAR MUSIC SALES



Source: IFPI Denmark, August 2014

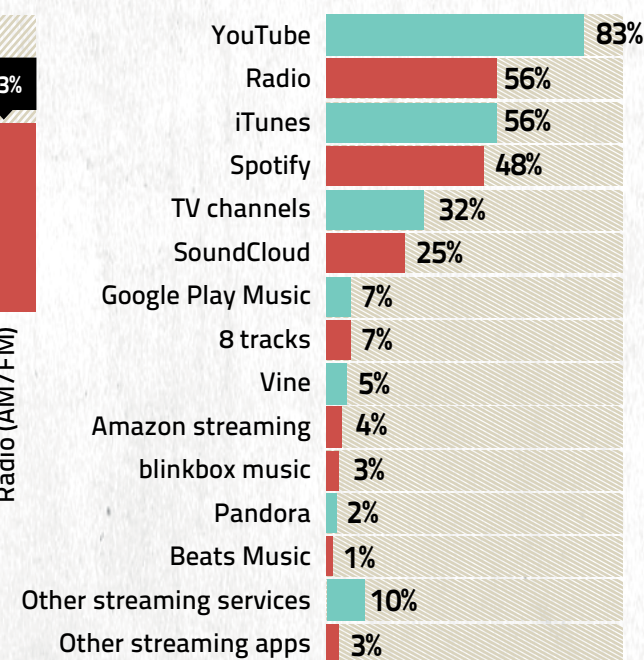
UK: MUSIC DISCOVERY & LISTENING TRENDS

Which of the following sources do you use to hear/learn about music?



Source: Voxburner, August 2014

Which of the following do you use to listen to music?



Kenya

According to the World Bank, Kenya's population stood at 44.3m inhabitants in 2013 – an 11.37% increase from 2009. One of the fastest growing economies in Africa, the country's GDP has increased at annual rates of between 4.4% and 5.8% for the past four years, driven by its services and agriculture sectors.

Kenya's digital infrastructure and technology penetration indicators rank amongst the highest in the continent. According to the Communications Authority of Kenya, internet users in Q1 2014 stood at 21.6m (a penetration of 53.3%) and mobile subscriptions reached 31.8m (an all-time high penetration of 78.2%).

The lack of an established trade body for the Kenyan recorded music industry means music sales in the country are not currently compiled and aggregated, making it hard to measure the exact size of the market or understand how the different business models compare. Moreover, the absence of lobbying efforts such as those from the RIAA in the US or BPI in the UK leads to little or no strong actions being taken against piracy, something which is understood to be widespread in the country. The Kenyan Association of Music Producers and the Music Copyright Society of Kenya are organisations seeking to address these and other issues but are still in their earliest stages.

music:ally understands that legal physical music sales in Kenya are insignificant. The sharp growth, however, in mobile penetration during the last decade has allowed mobile operators to carve a significant ringback tone (RBT) market.

Based on conversations with industry insiders, music:ally estimates that a major



operator like Safaricom could be generating approximately KSH 300m (\$3.4m) in RBT-derived income per month, and that the RBT market totals approximately \$54.4m in face value per year. According to the Communications Authority, Safaricom has a 67.8% share of the mobile market with 21.2m subscribers, followed by Airtel with 16.5% (5.1m subscribers), yuMobile with 8% (2.6m subscribers) and Orange with 6.8% (2.2m).

Echoing experiences in other developing markets (most notably China), content owners in Kenya are concerned about how RBT services operate and how the revenues are split. Local sources concur that the operators retain approximately 80% of the income, from something that has grown to become, by some distance, the largest recorded music revenue stream.

In the last two years Kenya has seen the rollout of the likes of Deezer, iTunes and The Kleek, but we understand that none of them have yet had any significant impact. A number of factors have played a part in this, including lack of publicity, the high pricing of content/mobile data, low smartphone penetration and inadequate payment systems (both iTunes and Deezer require

KENYA



STATS



Population 44.3m



GDP per capita US \$994



Internet users 21.6m



Broadband households 1.44m



Mobile subscriptions 31.8m

Communications Authority of Kenya, World Bank

payments in US dollars with international credit cards, which see little penetration in the country).

Because of these obstacles, many industry experts believe that all the roads lead back to the operators: if Kenya is to move away from RBT towards fully-fledged digital music services, getting the mobile companies on board will be crucial. This is not only because of the role they can play in subsidising services, data and handsets, but also because of how they are increasingly ingrained in consumers' habits and culture.

Mobile operators have not only become the first and main means of connecting to the internet for many Kenyans, but they also play a major role in commerce, providing a money transfer and micro-

financing service to their subscribers, who carry out transactions using their mobile phones via an SMS-based system.

Such has been the success of this system in Kenya that mobile payments have grown to play largely the same role as credit cards do in more developed markets: in early 2013, leading operator Safaricom stated that 31% of Kenya's GDP transacted through its own mobile payment system, M-Pesa. It is hard not to see how such an established ecosystem of billing, connectivity, marketing and distribution will be essential for any mobile digital content service in the country.

Another crucial aspect for music services seeking to go mainstream in Kenya is catalogue: music consumption in the country is dominated by local content. In this respect, provisioning local repertoire could be challenging as the frameworks for aggregators, supply chain providers and metadata lag behind those of developed markets. Some of the more established local labels in the country are Kasanga Music, Studio Sawa, Sub-Sahara Records and Tamasha Corporation. We understand, however, that local services rich in Kenyan repertoire, such as Spinlet and Mdundo, often deal directly with artists – who more often than not are a one-person operation.

Although the Kenyan music market is clearly challenging, the potential is very interesting indeed – particularly for those seeking to make a bigger play in Africa. Neighbouring countries are also seeing a burgeoning middle class plus the advent of sub-\$50 smartphones and stronger digital infrastructures – all of which makes the region a promising market for those seeking new opportunities. :)

Music Ally is a music business information and strategy company. We focus on the change taking place in the industry and provide information and insight into every aspect of the business, consumer research analysing the changing behaviour and trends in the industry, consultancy services to companies ranging from blue chip retailers and telecoms companies to start-ups; and training around methods to digitally market your artists and maximise the effectiveness of digital campaigns. We also work with a number of high profile music events around the world, from Bogota to Berlin and Brighton, bringing the industry together to have a good commonsense debate and get some consensus on how to move forward.



Andrew Fisher,
CEO, Shazam
Entertainment

Music Ally is an example of perceptive journalism at its best, with unrivalled coverage of the digital music sector"



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