music and online cultures in a changing platform ecosystem

Faculty of Social and Human Sciences (FCSH), Nova University Lisbon

conference schedule at a glance
detailed programme follows

thursday 19th june 2025

Time (UTC+1)	Auditorium 1 Floor 1	Auditorium 2 Floor 3
10:00–10:30	Foyer: Registration and refreshments	
10:30–11:00	Conference Welcome	
11:00–12:30	1a. Online fan practices	1b. Theorising online musical mediation
12:30–14:00	Lunch break	
14:00–15:30	2a. Net-native musics and practices	2b. Online music promotion and entrepreneurship
15:30–16:00	Foyer: Refreshments break	
16:00–17:15	3a. Music streaming: trends and imaginaries	3b. Platformised music production
17:15–17:45	Foyer: Refreshments break	
17:45–19:00	Plenary: Streaming Selves: Insights from Lusophone Algorithmic Music Cultures	
19:00	Terrace: Sunset social	

friday 20th june 2025

Time (UTC+1)	***Auditorium 3*** NB CHANGE OF ROOM - Floor 5	Auditorium 2 Floor 3
11:00–12:30	4a. Digital music patronage and plurality	4b. Music communities in the internet age
12:30–14:00	Lunch break	
14:00–15:15	5a. Music and generative artificial intelligence	5b. Live music online
15:15–15:45	**Foyer:** Refreshments break	
15:45–17:15	6a. Music streaming: systems and logics	6b. Online transmedia practices
17:15–17:45	**Foyer:** Refreshments break	
17:45–19:00		**Plenary:** ***NB CHANGE OF ROOM*** Algorithmic Echoes: AI, Creativity, and the Reconfiguration of Musical Engagement in Digital Platforms
19:00	End of day	
20:00	**External:** Dinner	

saturday 21ˢᵗ june 2025

Time (UTC+1)	✱✱✱Auditorium 3✱✱✱ NB CHANGE OF ROOM - Floor 5	Auditorium 2 Floor 3
11:00–12:15	7a. Ethnographies of music (un)sharing	7b. Digital music economy shifts
12:15–13:45	**Foyer:** Lunch break (provided)	
13:45–15:15		✱✱✱**NB CHANGE OF ROOM**✱✱✱ Keynote-respondents: Holly Rogers and Francesca Sobande
15:15–15:45	**Foyer:** Refreshments break	
15:45–16:45		Open roundtable: what's next?
16:45	End of conference	

programme

thursday 19th june 2025

Time (UTC+1)	Auditorium 1 Floor 1	Auditorium 2 Floor 3
10:00–10:30	**Foyer:** Registration and refreshments	
10:30–11:00	Conference welcome	
11:00–12:30	**1a. Online fan practices** Chair: Ed Katrak Spencer Hunting for Easter Eggs: Swifties, Fanspiracies, and the Politics of Online Music Fandom (Simone Driessen) 'crying on the internet for valid reasons': Emotional engagements with 'sad girl music' on TikTok (Hannah Jamet-Lange) Merging Worlds: The Influence of Digital Media and Mobile Communications on Live Concert Etiquette (Shoshana Lowe)	**1b. Theorising online musical mediation** Chair: Ivan Mouraviev TikTok's Reframing of Musical Intimacy: Modularity and Hyperlistening in Platform Culture (Anders Reuter) Digital Alienation in TikTok's Music Ecosystem: A Cyberpunk Perspective (Linzi Yang) TikTok and adolescent vocal identity: the social performativity that gives body to the voice (Chiara Guarino) "Reeling Madrid": music, urban ethos and experience of place through Instagram videos (Eduardo Viñuela)
12:30–14:00	Lunch break	
14:00–15:30	**2a. Net-native musics and practices** Chair: Massimiliano Raffa Queer Frequencies: Sonic Deconstruction and Digital Intersectionality in Post-Internet Music (Lucia Affaticati) TikTok and The Future of Remix (Valentina Paskar) H I G H A T W O R K: Drug use as musical subjectivity in vaporwave and phonk (Lucy March)	**2b. Online music promotion and entrepreneurship** Chair: Vanessa Valiati 'Calling all artists and music makers': artist affordances and platform-musician relationships on TikTok (Henry Morgan, Hannah Gibson, Yohann Rabearivelo) Platformised Knowledge Production and Digital Promotional Logics in the Hong Kong Independent Music Scene (François Mouillot) 'The tools come with baggage': Digital capitalism and the artist-centric discourse of music entrepreneurship (Tom Wagner) 'On Instagram, you've got four seconds to impress... that's the antithesis of jazz': the contested politics of circulation in contemporary jazz practice (Gummo Clare)
15:30–16:00	**Foyer:** Refreshments break	
16:00–17:15	**3a. Music streaming: trends and imaginaries** Chair: Raquel Campos Valverde Swimming Upstream? Independent Musicians, Music Platform Imaginaries and Artistic Autonomy under Platform Capitalism (Veronika Muchitsch, Luiz Alberto Moura, Maria Perevedentseva) What if the Musical Genre is No Longer Enough? Digital Methods for Investigating the Illusion of Categorisation (Mattia Zanotti and Mattia Merlini) Analyzing Streaming and Globalization of Regional Popular Music With Spotify's Audio Features (Kyle Haas)	**3b. Platformised music production** Chair: Henry Morgan Unboxing the Black Box (Rasmus Riegels Sørensen) Tracing Creative Processes in the Digital Music Studio and the Classroom (Anna Linge and Klas Matthiasson) Producing and Distributing Music in a Fully Digitized Environment: Challenges of Young Swedish Pop Music Entrepreneurs (Martin Knust and Göran Nikolausson)

17:15–17:45	**Foyer:** Refreshments break
17:45–19:00	**Plenary:** **Chair:** Maria Perevedentseva Streaming Selves: Insights from Lusophone Algorithmic Music Cultures (Vanessa Valiati, Felipe Soares, Adriana Amaral, Simone Pereira de Sá)
19:00	**Terrace:** Sunset social

friday 20th june 2025

Time (UTC+1)	Auditorium 3 Floor 5	Auditorium 2 Floor 3
11:00–12:30	**4a. Digital music patronage and plurality** **Chair:** Melissa Avdeeff Digital Labor and Relational Work on Patreon: Exploring Online Music Communities Dynamics (Elsa Aline Mariana Fortant) Bandcamp and the no-audience underground (Craig Stewart Johnson) Accessing musical capitalism: navigating copyright and online circulation from Equatorial Guinea (Pablo Infante-Amate) Accidental Anthropology: Inside a Music Platform Cooperative with Ampled's Last Artist-Owner (Alex W. Rodriguez)	**4b. Music communities in the internet age** **Chair:** Veronika Muchitsch Losing My Edge: Explorations of Gender and Technology on an Indie Music Subreddit (Jack Melton) Spotify, Popular Fiction, and Imagined Communities: Silvia Moreno-Garcia and the Curated Playlist (Jessica Stearns)
12:30–14:00	Lunch break	
14:00–15:15	**5a. Music and generative artificial intelligence** **Chair:** Mark Higgins "A safe, responsible, and profitable ecosystem of music": Analysing cultures of generative AI in the music industry (Bondy Kaye and Raquel Campos Valverde) Developing the AI Popular Music Imaginary: Speculative Discourse in Digital Spaces (Melissa Avdeeff) Stable Ecologies?: Computational Audible Infrastructures in Generative AI Audio (Iain Emsley)	**5b. Live music online** **Chair:** Steven Gamble Experiencing live music in the metaverse (Alessandra Micalizzi) Performing Decentralization: Web3 Musical Infrastructures and Aesthetics (Nic Vigilante) The Enjoyment of Live-Streamed Music Events: Pros, cons and implications (Francesco D'Amato)
15:15–15:45	**Foyer:** Refreshments break	
15:45–17:15	**6a. Music streaming: systems and logics** **Chair:** Mike Levine A media archaeological approach to platformization. The datafication of music listening in the first half of the 20th century (José Gálvez and Max Alt) Inequity by design: Music streaming taxonomies as ruinous infrastructure (Raquel Campos Valverde) AI killed the radio star: how do Spotify's features keep the platform relevant? (Vanessa Valiati, André Pase, and Camila Ferrareli)	**6b. Online transmedia practices** **Chair:** Júlia Durand Audiovisual Souvenirs from the Upside Down: Post-Binging Engagement with Pre-Existing Songs in the Soundtrack of Stranger Things (Julin Lee) EPIC: The Musical: A TikTokography (Lee Symons) Short-form Video and the Vernacularization of Library Music (Paula Harper) 'What is heard cannot be unheard': Misheard Lyric Videos and the Contingency of Music Listening (Artur Szarecki)
17:15–17:45	**Foyer:** Refreshments break	
17:45–19:00		**Plenary:** Algorithmic Echoes: AI, Creativity, and the Reconfiguration of Musical Engagement in Digital Platforms (Júlia Durand, Vinicius de Aguiar, André Malhado)
19:00	End of day	
20:00	**Casa do Alentejo:** Dinner	

saturday 21st june 2025

Time (UTC+1)	Auditorium 3 Floor 5	Auditorium 2 Floor 3
11:00–12:15	**7a. Ethnographies of music (un)sharing** **Chair:** Lucy March Technological Disobedience in Offline Cuba: Packaging and Sharing Music Through El Paquete Semanal (Mike Levine) YouTubization at the Grassroot Level? Promotion, Preservation, and Sustainability of Folk Music Traditions of Bengal through Platformization (Spandita Das) Sound, Space, Truth (Hossein Derakhshan)	**7b. Digital music economy shifts** **Chair:** Joana Freitas Market Consolidation, Chokepoint Capitalism, and Enshittification in the Australian Music Market (Sam Whiting) Sustainability of Indian Non-film Musicians in the Age of Platformisation (Aditya Lal) Scouting by the Numbers: Platform Metrics, A&R Strategies, and New Exclusions in Talent Discovery (Massimiliano Raffa)
12:15–13:45	**Foyer:** Lunch break (provided)	
13:45–15:15		**∗∗∗NB CHANGE OF ROOM∗∗∗** Keynote-respondents: Holly Rogers and Francesca Sobande
15:15–15:45	**Foyer:** Refreshments break	
15:45–16:45		Open roundtable: what's next?
16:45	End of conference	

abstracts

thursday 19th june 2025

1a. Online fan practices (11:00–12:30, Auditorium 1)

Hunting for Easter Eggs: Swifties, Fanspiracies, and the Politics of Online Music Fandom
Simone Driessen, Erasmus University Rotterdam

In a continuously changing digital landscape, Taylor Swift's fans, Swifties, have created a unique online music culture. This study examines Swifties through the lens of 'fanspiracy' (Driessen et al., 2024) - where fan(nish) activities intersect with conspiracy theories (cf. Marwick and Partin, 2022; Hyzen and van den Bulck, 2021), reflecting broader shifts in accessibility and use of platform ecosystems. The rise of fanspiracies, like #FreeBritney (Smith & Southerton, 2022) has gained increasing attention in academia, highlighting how online music fandom might mirror developments in society.

Swifties are active participants across multiple online platforms, moving between Tumblr and TikTok to Spotify. Baym (2018) argues music fans built the internet, Swifties did perhaps not build the internet, but certainly know how to navigate it effectively. This study explores how Swifties use social media beyond following their idol, focusing on their practices like 'hunting for Easter Eggs' and engaging in forensic fandom —decoding hidden messages in Swift's work: phenomena deeply embedded in online ecosystems.

Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 15 self-identified Swifties, this study illustrates how their digital activities, such as participating in theories like #Gaylor (cf. Eadon, 2024: the belief Swift is gay or queer), reflect both playful fan engagement and politically charged practices, blurring the lines between fandom, pop culture, and conspiracy. This highlights how the seemingly playful practices (cf. Nybro Petersen, 2022) of (online) music fandom deserve serious attention for their deeper cultural and political implications.

"crying on the internet for valid reasons:" Emotional engagements with 'sad girl music' on TikTok
Hannah Jamet-Lange, Concordia University, Montréal

A TikTok posted in reaction to indie rock band boygenius' song "Letter to an Old Poet" shows a young person looking melancholically at the camera, with the caption stating, "crying on the internet for valid reasons." Recently, TikTok has been flooded with similar videos of mostly young queer women showing themselves crying in reaction to so-called 'sad girl music': a contested term referring to music that explores 'ordinary' sad feelings. Utilizing familiar fandom practices like reaction videos, these TikToks connect the music to queer youths' own emotional states, their identities, and broader societal issues. Based in fandom, queer, and affect theory, this paper explores how emotions, and especially sadness, are mobilized in sad girl music fandom on TikTok. Conducting a visual and critical discourse analysis of TikToks collected using the platform's sound feature, I examine how TikTok's affordances of templatability and circumscribed creativity encourage emotional engagements with music and how these become part of fandom-specific platform vernacular practices. Building on Cvetkovich's conception of depression (2012) and Ahmed's sociality of sadness (2015), I further analyze how these music fandom practices facilitate collective identity constructions and experiences of sadness, function as coping mechanisms, and what they reveal about queer youths' expectations for the future in the context of ongoing socio-political crises. Overarchingly, this presentation contributes to understandings of the role of emotions and affects in platformed music fandoms.

Merging Worlds: The Influence of Digital Media and Mobile Communications on Live Concert Etiquette
Shoshana Lowe, New York University

Digital media and mobile communication technologies have fundamentally reshaped how individuals engage with both digital and physical spaces, blurring the boundaries between online and offline social dynamics. This study examines the transformation of concert etiquette and audience engagement in the digital age, where online fan cultures and mobile communication technologies increasingly shape behavior in live music spaces. Focusing on case studies of Death Grips, JPEGMAFIA, and MIKE—artists with highly active online followings—it explores three emerging phenomena: meme-inspired performance, audience-driven spectacle, and disruptive audience

engagement. From choreographed Batman vs. Joker fights to ironic TikTok dances in mosh pits and live-action meme reenactments during emotionally charged performances, concert spaces are becoming stages for audience self-performance shaped by digital norms.

While the project centers contemporary behaviors, it situates them within a genealogy of concert etiquette to contextualize how these shifts contrast with earlier norms rooted in genre, collectivity, and embodiment. Drawing on Erving Goffman's dramaturgy, Joshua Meyrowitz's situational geography, and Byung-Chul Han's critiques of digital narcissism and the disappearance of the Other, the research argues that live concerts have become hybrid spaces where audience members engage less as co-present spectators and more as performers seeking visibility and cultural fluency. The pursuit of attention and online validation often overrides emotional intimacy, challenging the traditional social contract between performer and audience.

1b. Theorising online musical mediation (11:00–12:30, Auditorium 2)

TikTok's Reframing of Musical Intimacy: Modularity and Hyperlistening in Platform Culture
Anders Reuter, Lund University Sweden

This presentation focuses on two interrelated key concepts. First, it examines the module as an emerging musical format within the interconnected platforms that shape contemporary popular music. This modularization of musical content involves sharing, selling, and sampling music in discrete sections that are continuously reconfigured transmedially across art forms and platforms. From music production tools to social media outlets like TikTok, the modular format adapts to the diverse, networked ecosystem of modern music production. Drawing on platform studies (Morris, 2020; Nielsen & Ganter, 2022; van Dijck et al., 2018), archival theory (Ernst, 2013; Taurino, 2023), and digital music production research (Bonini & Magaudda, 2024; D'Errico, 2022), the presentation explores how modularity blurs traditional boundaries between creation, distribution, and reception. It challenges distinctions between producers, meta-producers, music software, streaming services, and social media, underscoring how these categories are increasingly intertwined.

The second concept this paper introduces is hyperlistening. Drawing on Katherine Hayles' idea of hyper attention—rapid task-switching, multiple information streams, and a need for constant stimulation (Hayles, 2007, p. 187)—and Inge van de Ven's hyper reading, a non-linear, screen-based style of reading (van de Ven, 2023), the paper discusses how the modular format fosters a specific listening mode. In this hyperlistening, attention shifts fluidly across modular sections of music, much like how listeners interact with fragmented media across platforms. The modular structure encourages a synesthetic engagement, where sound fragments merge with visuals as they move through different media forms.

The paper specifically focuses on TikTok's short videos and how their appeal is, to a large extent, rooted in affect and intimacy, and no art form evokes these better than music's affective earworms (Abidin & Kaye, 2021; Şot, 2022). In relation to hyperlistening, the paper explores the intimate spaces of TikTok's videos, arguing that musical intimacy plays a key role in retaining user attention and engagement.

Digital Alienation in TikTok's Music Ecosystem: A Cyberpunk Perspective
Linzi Yang, University of Birmingham

TikTok, one of the world's most popular short video platforms, has rapidly dominated the digital media market since its launch in 2016. Its short video format and recommendation algorithm have reshaped users' information consumption habits and the online cultural ecosystem, including the music ecosystem. However, this influence is not always positive, as TikTok's digital mechanisms can manipulate the intentional states of producers and consumers to serve the proliferation of the platform rather than the well-being of its users. Cyberpunk, originally a sci-fi sub-genre emphasising the societal fallout from technological overdevelopment, has since evolved into a cultural lens for understanding today's increasingly tech-driven world. This research aims to explore the digital alienation of the music ecosystem of TikTok from the perspective of cyberpunk culture, including answering the questions of how the digital mechanism of the TikTok platform has influenced the creation, dissemination, promotion, and consumption of music inside or even outside the platform, and whether and how it has led to marginalization and power imbalances within the platform's music ecosystem. The research applies social media analysis, based on cyberpunk narratives and the theory of digital capitalism, in order to give insights to the detailed features of representative TikTok music and the platform mechanism and economy of TikTok. This research offers a fresh perspective on TikTok's music ecosystem and its influence on music culture and industry, and has the

potential to expand our understanding of cyberpunk as a cultural formation and a contemporary approach for cultural studies.

TikTok and adolescent vocal identity: the social performativity that gives body to the voice
Chiara Guarino, TU Dublin Conservatoire

Roland Barthes, in The Obvious and the Obtuse, writes that singing is to fantastically enjoy the unified body. But it doesn't always happen. The body, a fundamental element during the process of identity construction, is often excluded from adolescents' performances. The same body, however, becomes the protagonist on TikTok, a social within which a new type of performativity is being defined with respect to which adolescents act naturally. The goal of the research, which is under development, is to contribute to the growth of good teaching practices for current adolescents. To achieve this, the research is developed through the following questions: what are the aspects of performativity of TikTok related to artistic-musical expressiveness? What are the affordances of TikTok that enable adolescents to use their bodies naturally in online performances? What is the relationship, if there really were, between the gestural aspect of TikTok performances and the technical-expressive vocal aspect? What are the implications of this relationship for music pedagogy in adolescence?

The methodology involves the following steps:
- Content analysis of videos of vocal performances featured on TikTok (in progress);
- TikToker interviews regarding the process leading up to the final performance;
- Case Study: analysis of the gestural relationship of TikTok and voice through Praat software and Laban's observation criteria.

Research implication is also connected to the world of artistic practice and performers, worlds that are experiencing a continuous redefinition determined precisely by the impact of social media.

"Reeling Madrid": music, urban ethos and experience of place through Instagram videos
Eduardo Viñuela, University of Oviedo

Music videos share the online space with prosumer productions, drawing audiences' attention in many different directions and challenging our ability to distinguish between official and non-official content. This transmedia ecosystem multiplies the audiovisual potential of music, especially since the boom of TikTok and Instagram reels. In this paper, I explore the impact of reels on the experience of place by analyzing the way prosumers use music in their videos of Madrid. The recurrent use of the same songs (and excerpts), the same locations and the same video techniques creates an urban ethos (Krims, 2007) of the city that produces place (Lefebvre, 2005) and remediates iconic songs that take on new meanings.
Madrid has been the setting for many official music videos in Spain since the 1980s. In previous works I have studied the use of different locations in thins city to generate music meanings in different genres. The aim of this paper is to focus on prosumer content, understanding "reeling" practices as new ways of "musicking" (Small, 1998). I will analyze a significant sample of musical reels from Madrid to identify patterns in the representation of the city. Ultimately, I argue that the heavy circulation of these affect music meanings and configure imagined geographies (Said, 1978) of the city.

2a. Net-native musics and practices (14:00–15:30, Auditorium 1)

Queer Frequencies: Sonic Deconstruction and Digital Intersectionality in Post-Internet Music
Lucia Affaticati, University of Sussex

My paper examines an emerging genre of electronic music which developed alongside the rise of identity politics discourse on social media. While its status as a coherent genre remains contested, critics have loosely categorized it under the umbrella term "post-internet music." The term encompasses various sub-genres, such as Hyperpop, Deconstructed Club, and Conceptronica. Despite their stylistic differences, these sub-genres are united by a connection to internet culture and the digital discourse shaping it.

Three main characteristics define the post-internet genre. First, many artists within this space identify as queer, and their music often explores themes of intersectionality. Second, the genre is sonically innovative, featuring intricate genre-meshing and unconventional beat structures that disrupt traditional time signatures, creating

'deconstructed' sounds. Third, the music frequently references digital culture, reflecting the identities of its creators: as digital natives, these artists blend elements of video games, internet discourse, and 3D art, crafting immersive world-building experiences.

In this paper, I place attention to the conjuncture between the genre's aesthetic properties and its queerness. I argue that the genre is both enabled by, but also enables, internet-mediated identity categories, a practice which I term "digital intersectionality". Through a mix of artist interviews and bibliographic material gathered during my research, I question what it means to be queer in the contemporary era, how this might historically differ from previous elaborations of queerness, and to what extent electronic music - a genre category entrenched in masculinist narratives of technological mastery - can act as a vehicle for counter-normative expression.

TikTok and The Future of Remix
Valentina Paskar, University of Massachusetts Amherst

In 2007, Lev Manovich posited that while postmodernism defined the 1980s, remix culture would dominate the 2000s and likely extend into the following decade. As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, remixing has not only persisted but has become a vital part of our digital landscape, increasingly accessible and pervasive. As Spotify develops built-in remix features to compete with TikTok, the convergence of these platforms signals a transformative era for sound-based media, where the boundaries between production and consumption blur. This paper looks at how platform affordances of TikTok shape aesthetic choices in contemporary remix culture, with speeding up tracks, the prevalence of mashups, and the embrace of noisy and glitchy sonic textures. These practices reflect broader conversations about the interconnection between file sharing, digital formatting, and the regulation of user agency. Through employing platform and content analysis, we argue that TikTok represents a pioneering corporate culture of remixing that has gained global traction, setting a precedent for platforms like Spotify and Apple Music to follow suit. However, this appropriation of remix culture raises critical concerns about the potential threats to creativity and authenticity within the genre, urging a reevaluation of the future of musical expression.

H I G H A T W O R K: Drug use as musical subjectivity in vaporwave and phonk
Lucy March, University of Pennsylvania

From vaporwave producer Ramona Xavier's popular and oft-memed track from her 2011 album Floral Shoppe, roughly translated from the Japanese as "Lisa Frank 420/Modern Computing," to cloud rap performer Yung Lean's frequent consumption of the eponymous prescription cough syrup that led to an overdose and hospitalization in 2015, the relationship between Internet music culture and drug use is well-established. This paper will explore, primarily through the examples of the Internet music genres vaporwave and phonk, how these digital music cultures animate drug use, primarily cannabis use, as a form of musical subjectivity. Through a discursive and musicological analysis of these musics' evocation of primarily solitary consumption of drugs, this paper will explore how these genres interact with the mainstreaming and commercialization of weed culture amidst developments in decriminalization of the drug in both North America and Europe (Adlin, 2023). It will consider how paratextual characteristics of these musics, including album art and other objects of meaning that surround the music, in addition to sampling and production techniques in the music itself, promote a haze of conflicting emotions, from euphoria to paranoia. It relates these features to notions of functionalism discussed by scholars of digital music (Pelly, 2017; Hesmondhalgh, 2021), wherein the music becomes a background accompaniment for activities like working out, studying, and getting high. Finally, it will consider how these digital subgenres of electronic music extend the decades long history of drug use and psychedelia in electronic music cultures (Reynolds, 1998; Echard, 2024).

2b. Online music promotion & entrepreneurship (14:00–15:30, Auditorium 2)

'Calling all artists and music makers': artist affordances and platform-musician relationships on TikTok
Henry Morgan, Goldsmiths, University of London; Hannah Gibson; Yohann Rabearivelo, IRCAM

The exploitation of creative work by social media platforms is not a new phenomenon. Social platforms have long encouraged musicians to distinguish themselves from other users, while those based around user generated content offer privileges to anyone able to build an audience. Short-form video app TikTok is notable for its hybridisation of these two approaches. Its embodied, socially embedded content has become well-known for

producing viral music trends, catapulting previously unknown musicians to the heights of fame, however briefly. The platform's affinity for music and sound has been cited as a driving force in the broader 'aural turn' of 2020s social media (Abidin & Kaye 2021), and features recently added to the app suggest that TikTok's owners are invested in maintaining their position at the forefront of online musical culture.

One such feature is the Artist Account: a 'toolbox of features' letting users identify themselves as artists and more seamlessly integrate releases into their profile page (TikTok 2023). From a legal perspective this could offer artists stronger claims to intellectual ownership of the sounds they create and circulate, but also raises new questions about the porosity between promotional and creative work. This presentation builds on our ongoing research into TikTok's new suite of musical affordances, while examining discourses of discoverability, artist agency and entrepreneurship promoted by the platform. We explore this latest step in the platformisation of musical work and its broader implications for inter-platform relationships in a musical ecosystem still dominated by music streaming.

Platformised Knowledge Production and Digital Promotional Logics in the Hong Kong Independent Music Scene
François Mouillot, Hong Kong Baptist University

This paper examines the use of social media platforms – including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube as well as do-it-yourself (DIY) platforms – in the context of the Hong Kong (HK) independent music scene, a fragmented terrain of stylistic diverse 'micro-scenes' on the edge of the city's hegemonic Cantonese pop music industries. In particular, the paper analyses and how such uses point to three main distinct logics: 'industrial' visibility (remediating pre-existing mainstream industries promotional strategies, such as award shows), 'subcultural' visibility (relying on the potential of memes and other internet-natives forms to generate an affective community of practice), and 'archival' logics (by generating alternative streaming platforms for accessing and circulating recordings) of digital visibility. These logics, beyond promotional regimes associated with digital visibility globally, largely compensate for the ephemeral nature of infrastructures supporting independent music in HK and are linked to processes of knowledge creation that variously index and contrast pre-established practices of musical promotion in the city. Relying on interviews with independent music producers/promoters and artists, promoter and audience engagement with specific platforms as well as mobilizing Bernard Stiegler's concepts of negentropic knowledge production and of technology as 'pharmakon', this paper in turn argues that paying attention to specific digital logics of indie music promotion- embedded within, yet complicating emergent regimes of promotional visibility - in the HK Independent music scene may afford better understanding of social media implications in systems of independent cultural production outside of the American and European social media ecosystems.

'The tools come with baggage': Digital capitalism and the artist-centric discourse of music entrepreneurship
Tom Wagner, Royal Holloway, University of London

This presentation discusses post-1999 rise of the 'artist-centric' discourse independent labels, publishers, and artist services platforms use to differentiate themselves from industry incumbents, most notably the major labels, by offering more even royalty splits than traditional label deals and by allowing creators to retain the master rights. In doing so, these companies brand themselves as 'fair trade' or 'artist-centric'. While on the surface these new deals appear more 'fair' than traditional deals, when considered in the contexts of the digital music ecosystem and platform capitalism, it is far from clear that they are.

The presentation first reviews the public controversy surrounding streaming payments and the difficulties of determining what a 'fair' industry would look like. It then traces the rise of the 'artist-centric' discourse that animates much of the current entrepreneurship in the recorded music industry, discussing those discourses in relation to Adam Arvidsson's concept of 'industrious entrepreneurship', which is 'marked by a common emphasis on … the obligation to change the world through enterprise' (2019 p. 11). The third section discusses how the fairness rhetoric of industrious music start-ups intersects with, and perhaps exacerbates, the dynamics and contradictions of digital capitalism that feed neo/techno-feudalism (Dean 2024, Varoufakis 2024). The conclusion identifies areas for future research.

This presentation is based on in-progress research and interviews with entrepreneurs and users of their platforms. It focuses primarily on the North American and UK contexts, although it does allude to international case studies.

'On Instagram, you've got four seconds to impress... that's the antithesis of jazz': the contested politics of circulation in contemporary jazz practice
Gummo Clare

This paper analyses how contemporary musicians' social media self-promotion techniques have become a terrain of contestation and value formation. Drawing upon interview research and social media analysis of the 'new London jazz scene', I explore how significant resentment and exasperation at the demands of platform self-promotion underpin an emergent schema of artistic value. Scene members understand explicitly attention-grabbing social media content, e.g. short video clips of virtuosic individual musicianship, as antithetical to core jazz values and/or more 'real' forms of musicking such as the jam session. Although the scene itself relies heavily on social media promotion, for many, strenuous or excessive use of platforms such as Instagram and TikTok represents an artistically compromised and potentially anti-social acquiescence to the 'optimisation of culture' (Morris, 2020).

I contrast this with 'Extremely Online' forms of 'viral jazz' (Chinen, 2022), which have exerted significant influence on recent popular music culture through an enthusiastic and full-throated embrace of internet culture and 'platform vernaculars' (Gibbs et al, 2015). For these artists (e.g. Louis Cole, Domi and JD Beck), platform-adapted promotion appears to increase, rather than threaten, artistic autonomy.

Such divergent 'politics of circulation' (Beer, 2013) in jazz show how core tensions in popular music - authenticity, independence, liveness – have evolved under platformisation. I suggest promotion has superseded production as a site for litigating questions of genre, belonging and musical identity, and argue that the very conditions of total digital saturation are producing new forms of cultural value that reinscribe online/'IRL' divisions.

3a. Music streaming: trends and imaginaries (16:00–17:15, Auditorium 1)

Swimming Upstream? Independent Musicians, Music Platform Imaginaries and Artistic Autonomy under Platform Capitalism
Veronika Muchitsch, Uppsala University; Luiz Alberto Moura; Maria Perevedentseva, University of Salford

This paper draws on nine interviews with independent experimental musicians from Sweden, Portugal and the UK to critically examine the assumption that the platform age forces independent artists to adapt to the sociotechnical logics of algorithmic systems. We introduce the term 'music platform imaginary' to analyse how independent artists conceptualise and engage with digital music and social media platforms and describe the strategies they have developed for using platforms including Spotify, Bandcamp and Instagram in the distribution and promotion of their work. Our findings show that these musicians' music platform imaginaries circle around notions of democratisation, visibility, algorithms and fatigue, and that they are keenly aware of the operational changes brought about by platformisation as well as experiencing nostalgia for earlier online music cultures. The critical yet often ambivalent stance that artists adopt in relation to platformed music culture, alongside their continued participation in musical practices that exist beyond the platform economy, suggest that platformisation poses a set of contradictory challenges with respect to the nature and value of the artistic autonomy historically associated with independent music. To probe these tensions further, we analyse these artists' experiences through a matrix of concepts including professionalism and decommodification that chart the conflicting ideological tendencies of what we call the 'platform promise'. We conclude by speculating on the efficacy and sustainability of the 'elsewheres' to platformed music culture inhabited by our interlocutors and evaluating the civic responsibilities they place on audiences, platforms and the state.

What if the Musical Genre is No Longer Enough? Digital Methods for Investigating the Illusion of Categorisation
Mattia Zanotti, Università di Pavia; Mattia Merlini, Università Statale di Milano

To reflect on the contemporary relevance of musical genres, it is necessary to integrate a historical tradition of theoretical thinking with research on platform power and internet cultures which can be validated by novel empirical investigation methods. For the latter, digital tools used to analyse and aggregate metadata, become key resources for research. In our paper, exploiting the potential of digital tools, we first present some perspectives on Spotify's genre classification system; then, by studying genre on YouTube and TikTok, we show how these are perceived and reworked by platform users. In this way, we demonstrate how in some cases the non-transparency

of data provided by platforms should be compared with other types of analysis, directly carried on internet cultures. Moreover, it should be kept in mind that all metadata we can access via our digital tools is in the hands of corporations that have the power to change their accessibility and their function within the system at their will, thus affecting not only the kind of agency they perform on current communities of listeners and musicians and their conception of genres, but also our epistemological grasp on the matter. We use the case study of the recent changes in Spotify's staff to show how the use of music genre in the Spotify Wrapped feature has changed in the last three editions, thus showcasing the power that corporate decisions have on the manipulation of the imaginaries regarding genres, being them existent or made-up.

Analyzing Streaming and Globalization of Regional Popular Music With Spotify's Audio Features
Kyle Haas

Globalization of popular music remains an ongoing and evolving phenomenon as new technology emerges which changes the flow and distribution of cultural artifacts. This research builds upon the existing conversation by utilizing Spotify's audio analysis metrics to measure the influence of streaming on the musical characteristics of regional popular music. Specifically, musical characteristics of popular music from Korea and Japan from 2010 through 2020 were compared against the global top 100 tracks to measure whether global trends were reflected in the musical attributes of popular music of domestic artists, and whether the growth of streaming increased or decreased this influence. The second contribution this research makes is by presenting a novel methodology in how researchers measure the globalization of regional music markets. Previous research heavily leaned on chart diversity and the presence of international artists on regional popular music charts (Achterberg et al., 2011; Bello & Garcia, 2021; Verboord & Brandellero, 2018), but this approach is unable to account for global influence in the form of the fusion of local and global culture that is reflected in the musical characteristics of domestic artists (Garofalo, 1993; Ho, 2003). The results suggest that streaming is encouraging greater diversity in the musical characteristics of popular music, and may be a factor contributing to the globalization of regional music markets. Secondly, this research suggests that such globalization is represented in the algorithmic analysis of the musical characteristics of popular music, and this approach may be a better metric for the measure of globalization in music.

3b. Platformised music production (16:00–17:15, Auditorium 2)

Unboxing the Black Box
Rasmus Riegels Sørensen, Lund University

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, producers who were unable to generate income through DJing turned to social media. They began livestreaming their production of electronic dance music (EDM) on platforms such as Twitch and YouTube, where viewers could support them through donations. This created an environment where the production of EDM songs became a public and interactive spectacle, contrasting with the previously solitary nature of music production (Butler, 2014).

This paper argues that recent developments in Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) from recording tools to those focused on sound generation and processing (Reuter, 2022) have been integral to the platformization (Poell et al., 2019) of DAWs. This evolution has enabled music production to become a social phenomenon that spans multiple platforms, from Discord music challenges to PayPal donations. The paper will demonstrate the potential for musicology in having the often black-boxed process of music production "unboxed" and will explore the consequences for composers who respond to continuous suggestions from comment sections, using examples from producers Commisar Lag and John Selway.

Tracing Creative Processes in the Digital Music Studio and the Classroom
Anna Linge and Klas Matthiasson, Linnæus University Växjö

Digital tools and platforms are employed in Swedish schools for teaching music production. With digital tools, the focus shifts on the students' creation instead of imitating or internalizing more traditional subjects and artifacts for learning presented by the teacher. As part of a value-based pedagogy, the teacher's role will be to facilitate the students' creative processes. According to the prominent Swedish music producer Andreas Carlsson, such tools offer a playful way to find one's own expression. In this presentation, a lecturer in music pedagogy and a secondary school music teacher analyze experiences with teaching music with digital platforms and tools in school. We will present results from a major study in Swedish schools that was conducted 2023/24 that employed digital platforms and tools in music education. Digital music creation can contribute in a democratic way to

educational goals that prepare students for an uncertain, yet creative and entrepreneurial future. How did the teachers experience the employment of digital media and what do they think about the quality of the music that was produced? And which opportunities does teaching with digital tools offer that traditional music lessons do not? As part of the presentation, the Swedish platform Soundtrap is presented, which is the DAW used in the study and in most Swedish schools. We highlight the tool's potential but also its limitations in a short live demonstration.

Producing and Distributing Music in a Fully Digitized Environment: Challenges of Young Swedish Pop Music Entrepreneurs
Martin Knust and Göran Nikolausson, Linnæus University Växjö

This paper presents results from interviews with six professional pop music entrepreneurs from Sweden: Björn Ulvaeus (b. 1945), Andreas Carlsson (b. 1973), Julia Karlsson and Ida "Adée" Olsson (b. 1989), Andreas Ahlm (b. 1993) and Hilda Stenmalm (b. 1996). Most of them have and have had significant international impact in the pop genre. The purpose of the interviews was to conceptualize different aspects of their creative work and entrepreneurship in the context of digitization. Despite vast shifts on the technological side, the working processes and creative strategies of music producers have evolved and changed only within certain limitations. Distribution and marketing, though, have a lot, replacing physical records with platform streams which created a music landscape that follows different laws and rules. We will present challenges and concerns that our interviewees articulated concerning the increasing and persistent systemsic inequity in the music industry, the upsides and downsides of digitization and the discrepancy between legal regulations and entrepreneurial reality. Given the international successes of Swedish pop music producers, the high degree of digitization of the domestic music market and the concentration of economic power on Swedish platforms like Spotify and Epidemic Sound, the interview material contains observations and statements that give insights into challenges that are relevant for the global music producers' community and the distribution of their products.

Plenary (17:45–19:00)

Streaming Selves: Insights from Lusophone Algorithmic Music Cultures

Vanessa Valiati, Universidade Feevale; Felipe Soares, London College of Communication, University of the Arts London; Adriana Amaral, Paulista University; Simone Pereira de Sá, Fluminense Federal University

Chair: Maria Perevedentseva

This session brings together researchers who are studying music from diverse perspectives to discuss platform-based music consumption practices and musical communities, focusing mainly on findings from two projects based in Brazil: 'Music and Platformization: The Algorithmic Mediation of Taste and Streaming Consumption Practices" and "Lusophone Peripheral Pop Music Networks: Genres, Formats, Performances and Narratives in Flows in the Digital Ecosystem". Combining empirical and theoretical insights with a discussion of methodological challenges, we will discuss topics such as the performances of taste and the tensions between algorithmic personalisation and individuation in algorithmic events; how music listeners employ music streaming services to refine their taste; and how listeners construct aspirational identities that align with their desired self-perceptions and social contexts. Also, bearing in mind that music is an essential vector of cross-cultural connection between notions of belonging and identity and the imaginaries and actions that they bring forth into the world, we will consider the aesthetic, socio-technical and identity aspects characteristic of the cultural flows of Lusophone musical communities in the context of the platformization of culture. Overall, the central aims are to interrogate how the platformisation of music and its entanglement with individuated social media practices challenge traditional theories of music consumption and to explore implications for culture and society.

friday 20th june 2025

4a. Digital music patronage and plurality (11:00–12:30, Auditorium 3)

Digital Labor and Relational Work on Patreon: Exploring Online Music Communities Dynamics
Elsa Aline Mariana Fortant, Institut national de la recherche scientifique

Since the Internet's advent, we have seen the music industry's platformization (Casilli and Posada 2019), reshaping not only music production and distribution but also artist-audience interactions. Within the ecosystem of platforms used by musicians, this paper focuses on Patreon, a subscription-based crowdfunding platform. This platform allows fans to subscribe to artists and automate monthly payments, in exchange for exclusive content, perks, and sometimes access to a members-only Discord community. In the context of our doctoral research, we are analyzing the musical practices revolving around this platform. We utilize Becker's interactionist framework of the "art world" (2006) to study the division of labor between actors (roles, tasks, interactions). We also apply Menger's concept of the "artist as a worker" (2002) to analyze actions, interactions and relations between the actors.

For the subscription model to succeed, artists must foster long-term affective relationships with fans, involving relational labor (Baym 2015, Hair 2021). On the other hand, this connection can manifest as digital labor (Cardon & Casilli 2015) through fans who take on roles in community management and moderation. This organization of work prompts the question: what types of digital labor occur within Patreon communities and their affiliated Discord channels?

After initial non-participatory observations in three Patreon music communities, we are conducting interviews with artists and members of the community to analyze relational and digital labor. First, this paper will detail the various forms of digital labor identified within the Patreon and Discord communities studied, and second, we will show how these collaborative interactions can enhance community engagement.

Bandcamp and the no-audience underground
Craig Stewart Johnson, Northumbria University

This paper stems from my ongoing research into the DIY, experimental music scene known as the 'no-audience underground' (Hayler, 2012). This trans-local scene is personified by its diverse genres, small audience numbers, non-hierarchical structure, self-sufficiency, hobbyism and indifference to the mainstream.

Bandcamp is the de facto online platform for many of its practitioners, with the service mirroring some of these underlying principles. Bandcamp could initially be seen as a radical, democratic alternative to the extractive approaches of its mainstream competitors, positioning itself at the midpoint between marketplace and streaming platform. Putting the means of distribution in the hands of the artist, the platform allows many to reach an audience previously deemed impossible by preceding technologies. However, as I argue here, Bandcamp's once democratic processes have led to a sense of singularity in digital distribution, where the service now seems to be the only choice for those in the no-audience underground, allowing it to solidify its power and dictate individuals' behaviour.

I suggest that the no-audience underground relies on using 'tactics' (de Certeau, 1984), as opposed to 'strategies', to continue to operate somewhat autonomously as a translocal scene. Using ongoing ethnographic research methods, I highlight how the way Bandcamp is used has shifted through time and how its once democratic potential now sits at a point of contradiction and that the no-audience underground has begun to change tactics. In doing so, I draw attention to the practices of individuals who are attempting to create alternatives to the singularity of Bandcamp within this scene, envisioning a means of distribution which encourages plurality beyond the monocultural dominance of Bandcamp as the sole online home of the no-audience underground.

Accessing musical capitalism: navigating copyright and online circulation from Equatorial Guinea
Pablo Infante-Amate, Universidad de Jaén

In recent years, several ethnographies have shown the impact of digitization and the introduction of the internet on African music economies. Increasing entrepreneurship, the rise of the telecom industry, and the widespread use of smartphones in countries such as Nigeria and Kenya are reconfiguring modes of exchange, forms of labor,

and consumption practices. At the core of this revolution is the harmonization of copyright law via international treaties and institutions such as the World Intellectual Property Organization. Both in the Global South and the Global North, it seems, the music industry has become increasingly dependent on copyright law to extract profit from music.

This paper, however, offers a rather contrasting case. Drawing on ethnographic research, it explores how these global transformations have shaped musical practices in Equatorial Guinea, where the local music economy is governed by patronage relations between artists and powerful politicians that animate the circulation of unlicensed praise songs in a highly monitored and often oppressive network. In this environment, a few artists look for alternatives to patronage, including the possibility of entering the realm of musical capitalism and the global music industry via the internet. Yet their efforts are constantly shattered by the pervasiveness of logics and institutions intrinsic to musical patronage: from well-rooted conceptions of ownership that contradict liberal understandings of copyright to the lack of key state institutions for the collection of royalties, to the distrust of an unknown online world that may well bring about new forms of opaque entrapment and oppression.

Accidental Anthropology: Inside a Music Platform Cooperative with Ampled's Last Artist-Owner
Alex W. Rodriguez, Wellesley College

Over the past decade, independent musicians have faced endemic precarity due in large part to changes in technology and political economy of the music industry. One response to this dilemma has been the formation of platform cooperatives as alternative propositions—an effort to, in the words of Rebecca Giblin and Cory Doctorow, "seize the means of computation" (2022) by reverse-engineering the software of popular tools developed by venture capital-backed startups and holding them in common through cooperative governance structures.

One such initiative, Ampled, ran from 2019-2023 as a music-focused Patreon alternative. This presentation offers a report based on "accidental anthropology"—a retrospective report of observations and sociocultural analysis based on the author's participation in the platform as an artist-owner from 2022-2023, during a time in which they were working primarily as an organizer in the solidarity economy movement. This perspective will provide insight into the platform's struggles to align its practice with its purpose in the face of structural barriers, the unique challenges of organizing artists as workers, and the contradictions inherent to valuing labor in the contemporary music industry.

Drawing on anthropological theories of practice, particularly as they pertain to maintaining projects on the margins of power (Ortner 2006), this presentation suggests what lessons can be learned from Ampled's efforts (and ultimate failure) for ongoing projects aiming to sustain viable alternatives to dominant industry paradigms.

4b. Music communities in the internet age (11:00–12:30, Auditorium 2)

Losing My Edge: Explorations of Gender and Technology on an Indie Music Subreddit
Jack Melton, University of Melbourne

Throughout the twenty-first century, the rapid transformations of online systems radically altered the concept of indie, a genre traditionally seen as adverse to technology. From Pitchfork, Napster and forums to Spotify, YouTube and social media, the manner in which fans sought out and engaged with indie music changed dramatically. How, then, did these changes affect the nature of indie fandom? Through dual lenses of genre and masculinity I have explored how indie functions as both genre and identity on an indie-focused subreddit. Using ethnographic discourse analysis to explore novel Reddit data scraped using the Pushshift API, I have analysed 5,567 threads and 514,638 comments across the period of 2014-2019 to understand the conceptual world of users within this time period. Representing the culmination of my PhD research, this presentation will explore this project's four major findings: how indie is understood as a genre by fans in the twenty-first century not through musical signifiers but through institutions; how indie music constructs 'soft' alternative masculinities, and how these soft masculinities are similar to, and distinct from, the geek masculinities that dominate Reddit; how the elevated taste position and homogeneity of indie fans, and the performers they deify, allows indie fans to construct the notion of 'essential' music along lines of race and gender; and how through embracing the limitless access to music online, indie fans have entered into a complex, contested relationship with streaming services. Through these findings, I will illuminate how indie fans have changed, transformed, and reproduced indie fandom online.

Spotify, Popular Fiction, and Imagined Communities: Silvia Moreno-Garcia and the Curated Playlist
Jessica Stearns, Texas A&M University

A recent trend among authors of popular fiction is curating Spotify playlists to accompany their books. The music they select is either meant to create an atmosphere or mood appropriate to the story or are pieces that would actually exist in the sound world of the book. One such author is Silvia Moreno-Garcia, who has organized playlists for several of her publications, including Mexican Gothic, Signal to Noise, and The Seventh Veil of Salome. Moreno-Garcia, who grew up surrounded by a variety of music and is well-versed in numerous genres and styles, purposefully chooses what to include in these playlists. Whether she selected pieces that could exist in the context of the story or to create "vibes," as she puts it, readers who listen to the playlists not only have a deeper appreciation of Moreno-Garcia's work and creative process, but also form a type of connection to the author herself.

This paper uses Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities to explore the relationship that forms between Moreno-Garcia and her readers through the Spotify playlists associated with her books. Such an analysis builds on research examining imagined communities in the context of popular and dance music by scholars including Rosemary Lucy Hill and Julie Sellers. Applying this approach here sheds light on the link between popular fiction and music streaming, as well as the connection between readers and author.

5a. Music and generative artificial intelligence (14:00–15:15, Auditorium 3)

"A safe, responsible, and profitable ecosystem of music": Analysing cultures of generative AI in the music industry
D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye and Raquel Campos Valverde, University of Leeds

In February 2024, Universal (UMG) announced it would be removing its entire catalogue from TikTok, citing concerns about fair compensation, copyright, and generative AI music. However, six months earlier UMG had announced a partnership with YouTube to launch a music AI incubator to develop these tools. So which is it? Is AI a threat to human creativity or does it foster a new creative wave in the music industries? This paper explores music industry discourses about generative AI to understand how key stakeholder views differ across different industry fields. Using a mixed methods approach to industry discourse analysis, we mobilise primary data from ethnographic fieldwork at music industry conferences between 2023-24 and secondary data from industry trade press, corporate statements, government reports, and policy recommendations suggested by musicians associations and unions. Our analysis illuminates tensions and contradictions among protectionist, liberalizing, and conciliatory views towards generative AI. Some corporate and public stakeholders advocate for protectionist business policies and responsible AI development that foregrounds potential harms of AI. Other corporate stakeholders offer far more liberalizing views, encouraging investment, experimentation and adoption of generative AI systems to cut costs and increase profits. We also note conciliatory positions, mainly from musicians' unions and associations, trying to find compromises between these two poles. We conclude by arguing that these contradictions reveal a fundamentally misunderstood notion of universal AI ethics.

Developing the AI Popular Music Imaginary: Speculative Discourse in Digital Spaces
Melissa Avdeeff, University of Stirling

This paper explores the development of an AI popular music imaginary within digital spaces, particularly focusing on YouTube as a site of speculative discourse. As AI technologies become increasingly utilised within music production, debates are generated about creativity, authorship, and the future of music. Through Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA), this study examines YouTube comments on videos that speculate about AI's role in the music industries, through the lens of collective future thought. Key themes emerge, including copyright concerns, the concept of 'soul' in music, and anthropocentric creativity. These discussions reflect broader societal tensions between human and machine creativity and highlight the role of digital platforms in shaping public perceptions and industry practices. The paper argues that YouTube and similar platforms are instrumental in crafting the AI popular music imaginary at this crucial stage of technological development, serving

as arenas for public debate and influencing mainstream narratives. This paper suggests that as AI tools become normalized, they may lead to new forms of musical collaboration while also perpetuating longstanding power structures associated with artistic value judgements. This research contributes to the broader discourse on AI and creativity, emphasizing the importance of understanding how digital spaces are reshaping cultural and technological landscapes.

Stable Ecologies?: Computational Audible Infrastructures in Generative AI Audio
Iain Emsley, Warwick University

Generative AI tools and models, such as Stability AI's audio (Evans, 2024) or OpenAI's Jukebox (Dhariwal, 2020), are prevalent in audio culture. Owned by platforms, these systems enable probabilistic audio creativity from text or audio inputs. This paper introduces initial work consider digital aspects of audible infrastructures (Devine and Boudreault-Fournier, 2019). Drawing on the concept of platforms becoming infrastructure (Plantin et al, 2016), a static reading of Stability AI open audio is used to explicate the relationships within it and understand the computational culture that creates the objects that we study.

Algorithmic and dataset genealogies contextualise Stability's model and relationships within and without the ecosystem. Set within the context of the recent boom in audio models, this tracing and modelling sheds light on platforms becoming infrastructural devices through models, datasets, and algorithms. The relations point to sound as a signal through algorithmic re-use and adaptation.

A distant reading of the Maestro and Free Music Archive dataset metadata explores the terms and composers as tokens using counts, networks, and text processing. The terms' simplicity and limitations affect what can be used as an audio input token stream to interact with the sound signal. The readings are used to explore the limitations in both the model and the generated audio.

As platforms become infrastructural ecologies that enable creative and knowledge work, limitations and control are embedded as text is restructured into audio. The introduced methods develop a medium-specific digital humanities approach to studying generative AI platforms in computational music culture.

5b. Live music online (14:00–15:15, Auditorium 2)

Experiencing live music in the metaverse
Alessandra Micalizzi, SAE Institute - Pegaso University

Creative industries have always had a strong connection with technologies. In the specific case of music, technique and technology have often worked side by side, enabling experimentation, cross-contamination, and the creation of new genres. The advent of immersive technologies has certainly impacted both production processes and consumption. And it is truer if we consider the case of the Metaverse, or rather the metaverses, that are virtual environments that allow users to 'immerse' in a digital world, fostering full integration of one's on-life experience.

Although new technologies and devices continue to evolve, allowing experiences more and more 'natural', some technical issues and certain forms of psychological and cultural resistances still persist. This paper aims to present the results of an empirical research, supported and funded by the Italian Ministry of Research (MUR), with the goal of developing interaction environments in the metaverse that allow for live music experiences, both for performances and educational activities.

To meet this overarching development goal, two research phases were planned, one before and one after the creation of the virtual environment. In the presentation, we will focus on describing the main results of focus groups carried out with Italian producers and artists to reconstruct experiences, perceptions, and imaginaries related to the metaverse and music.

The content analysis of the transcription is carried out thanks to the support of ChatGPT for work.

Performing Decentralization: Web3 Musical Infrastructures and Aesthetics
Nic Vigilante, Cornell University

In the last several years, small but vibrant Web3 musical ecosystems have begun to emerge. Situated at the intersection of techno-utopian libertarianism and broad disenchantment with the musical infrastructures of Web2, these Web3 communities are attempting to craft the future of music on the internet. In this paper, I draw from my preliminary ethnographic research on musical performances in Web3 virtual worlds to argue that the operative principles of Web3 blockchain infrastructures must be understood as both technical and aesthetic. Blockchains and their various manifestations – such as NFTs, cryptocurrencies, and DAOs (decentralized autonomous organizations) – function not only as the technical bedrock upon Web3 is built but also a set of guiding cultural ideals and aesthetic principles. Musical performances in Web3 are a meeting point for these technics and aesthetics, and as such they offer unique insight into the structuring principles of sociality on the blockchain. I focus here on concerts in Decentraland (a virtual world and DAO on the Ethereum blockchain) ranging from one-off events to multi-day music festivals; in doing so, I demonstrate how music acts as a social, temporal, and affective metric of sociality in Web3 spaces. The rise of Web3 infrastructures involves, quite literally, the construction of new virtual worlds. As such, we must attend to the blockchain as not only a technological entity but also as the structuring cultural grammar of these emergent worlds – and the ethnographic study of musical performance offers a unique lens through which to do this.

The Enjoyment of Live-Streamed Music Events: Pros, cons and implications
Francesco D'Amato, University of Rome 'La Sapienza'

Based on the results of a research conducted in Italy using quantitative and qualitative methods, the paper intends to examine some of the meanings and values attributed to the live streaming of music events.

In particular, on the one hand, it will focus on some aspects that differentiate the experiences of events enjoyed in physical proximity from those enjoyed through live streaming; on the other hand, it will highlight some ambivalences with respect to these aspects. Furthermore, the paper reflects on the indications that this analysis suggests regarding some of the potentialities often ascribed to live-streaming, such as that of favoring the enlargement and diversification of performers' audiences or the discovery of new performers by music enthusiasts. More generally, the paper aims to point to the ways live-streaming can reconfigure experiences and meanings of musical events depending on the articulation between their specific mediation by digital platforms, the broader context in which live streaming is enjoyed and individual dispositions.

The analysis draws on the results of a research study that included 333 responses to a web survey and 28 in-depth interviews.

6a. Music streaming: systems and logics (15:45–17:15, Auditorium 3)

A media archaeological approach to platformization. The datafication of music listening in the first half of the 20th century
José Gálvez, University of Augsburg; Max Alt, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität

Perhaps the most prominent subject in current music business research is music streaming. Indeed, music streaming services have radically transformed the infrastructures of music listening, which has been rendered as a source of data collection, aggregation, and exchange. Yet, for all the important insights the booming research on music streaming (especially on Spotify) has offered, a historical dimension remains widely unexplored.

In our presentation we argue, that the platformization of music and the datafication of music listening has its origins in the first half of the 20th century. To elaborate this hypothesis, we will focus on two concrete devices for the automatic data generation about and through listening: (1) the audimeter and the (2) play meter. (1) The audimeter, an automatically operating wavelength-recorder, was invented by market researchers in the 1930s, to achieve objective listening data through the use of radio sets. The audimeter not only interconnects radio listening and market research, but it also foreshadows the automated and hidden extraction of data while listening to media content, which is a key business of music streaming services today. (2) The play meter, a hidden counting device installed in jukeboxes, was invented in the 1930s by Wurlitzer to precisely register the number of times each record was selected. This data became crucial for jukebox operators to optimize their programming and maximize the revenues per Jukebox. The curation of playlists in music streaming platforms is based on this principle.

By means of historical and media-archeological analysis, we aim to demonstrate concisely that the datafication and monetization of music listening in the 21st century have their origins in the radio market research as well as in the jukebox industry of the 1930s and 1940s. In doing so, we also aim to add a fresh historical dimension to critical debates about music listening, datafication and the valorization of metadata in digitized societies.

Inequity by design: Music streaming taxonomies as ruinous infrastructure
Raquel Campos Valverde, University of Leeds

Despite recent efforts to understand streaming classification and recommendation (Hesmondhalgh et al. 2023) it is still unclear which musical taxonomies are used by music streaming platforms to populate their audiovisual libraries. Previous research shows how the corporate culture of each platform and the understandings of music and genre of their employees influence streaming design (Seaver 2022). Streaming platforms have also not adopted established notions of common good used by public service media (Ferraro et al. 2022). However, research on music genre that dealt with issues of commercialisation of so-called 'world music' (Kassabian 2004), does not have continuity after the streaming boom. This paper explores the ideologies behind musical taxonomies as digital infrastructures, and their role in prescribing and reproducing Western ways of thinking about music. It analyses the infrastructure of music classification, to understand how streaming platforms organise musical experience, including structures of recommendation, and dynamics of discovery and exploration. It does so through data collected via platform and interface analysis of genre representation and organisation, fieldwork at music industry conferences, including interviews with industry stakeholders and workers, and discourse analysis of marketing materials about curation. I conclude by providing an anthropological reading of digital infrastructure where human discourse and material structures are intertwined in the production of musical values, arguing that music streaming taxonomies are better understood as ruinous infrastructures (Appel, Anand and Gupta 2018). These infrastructures promise to advance normative notions of common good, access, inclusion, equality, and democratisation but instead fail to deliver these potentials.

AI killed the radio star: how do Spotify's features keep the platform relevant?
Vanessa Valiati, André Pase, and Camila Ferrareli, Universidade Feevale

Music streaming platforms have become a fundamental part of users' musical experiences, tastes and identities (Hagen & Lüders, 2017; Webster, 2021). In 2024, Spotify introduced a new feature, Daylist. With this attribute, Spotify combines its trained algorithm to suggest songs according to users' musical preferences, offering an alternative to radio stations. However, there is a sentimental feature that classic media creates in audiences: the serendipity of enjoying an unexpected song. In 'Daylist', there is a combination of the user's history, preferences and understanding of what has been offered as a "discovery". Thus, in a scenario of promises of personalization, these platforms offer us a kind of "algorithmic magic" (Burgess et al., 2022, p. 47), in other words, serendipity happens when cultivated by our data and digital trails.

'Daylist' initially aroused this interest, but almost a year after its launch, we can see that take-up seems to have decreased. With this in mind, the study set off in a new direction, that of mapping the resources that the platform makes available to maintain its perception of qualified delivery of the algorithm. In other words, (platform's) serendipity.

To this end, the methodological procedures combine various instruments, including in-depth interviews for a qualitative approach. The 25 interviewees were recruited from a pool to a brief invitation to participate in the survey. Most of the participants have received formal education (HE) and come from urban environments in southern Brazil (mainly Porto Alegre). In this way, we hope to understand what strategies Spotify uses to remain relevant.

6b. Online transmedia practices (15:45–17:15, Auditorium 2)

Audiovisual Souvenirs from the Upside Down: Post-Binging Engagement with Pre-Existing Songs in the Soundtrack of Stranger Things
Julin Lee, University of Music and Theatre Munich

The summer of 2022 saw the resurgence of Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill" (1985) following its use in the fourth season of Stranger Things (Netflix, 2016–present). Besides climbing various music charts internationally, the

song's use in Stranger Things inspired a multitude of audiovisual paratexts: from samples of Bush's original recording accompanying various TikTok videos recreating the original scene to epic covers of the song produced in the style of the "orchestral mix" version heard in the show's soundtrack. These fan-made videos evidence a strong engagement with Bush's song in relation to Stranger Things beyond its native streaming platform on various social media platforms.

Using this as the main case study, I aim to theorize how series soundtracks are engaged with on social media in the post-viewing phase, particularly following the binge-watching experience encouraged by the affordances of streaming platforms such as Netflix through their bulk-release format. First, I draw parallels in experiential intensity between binge-watching and tourism, which engenders the reliance on salient (audiovisual) landmarks for (narrative) orientation, both during and after (binge) trips. After drawing on theories from spatial informational sciences (Sorrows and Hirtle 1999) to systematically characterize "landmark sequences," I develop an analytical framework around "audiovisual souvenirs" that allow narrative tourists to extend their viewing experiences. Adapting approaches from material culture studies of tourism (Hume 2014), I build a comparative framework for analyzing audiovisual souvenirs ranging from original clips to TikTok recreations and YouTube covers to examine the different socio-cultural roles they fulfil.

EPIC: The Musical: A TikTokography
Lee Symons, Stellenbosch University

EPIC: The Musical is an online sensation that has received millions of streams and views despite the fact that it is unfinished. Drawing on Anna Kornbluh's (2023) work on mediation and too-late capitalism, this research considers how the role of prosumers in the attention economy on TikTok has changed the status and form of the work of art on social media. This paper explores the following questions: How does EPIC: The Musical ontologically reimagine the work of art in the era of social media production and distribution? The entire process of the musical's production has been made available (and monetizable) through TikTok, where the creator, Jorge Rivera-Herrans, has posted videos documenting his progress since 2021, and the musical's release on digital streaming platforms has been serialised as nine separate concept albums, fundamentally changing our mode of consumption. Additionally, how does TikTok facilitate the technological production and reproduction of the work of art, and what types of social networks are involved in this process? Through a digital ethnography of Jorge Rivera-Herrans's TikTok account conducted during 2024, this research follows the use of TikTok's "Use this Sound" and "Duet" functions to show how these platform features encourage a participatory culture where prosumers are involved in producing and circulating multiple versions of the work of art, and the online community is actively incorporated in the production of the musical, with Rivera-Herrans casting roles through TikTok's "Duet" feature and collaborating with artists from the fandom to create animations to accompany the musical narrative.

Short-form Video and the Vernacularization of Library Music
Paula Harper, University of Chicago

One of the most-played audios on the TikTok platform—"Monkeys Spinning Monkeys," by prolific royalty-free composer Kevin MacLeod—has nonetheless gone largely unacknowledged by the platform itself. For example, it was nowhere to be found on any of TikTok's annual "Our Year in Music" rundowns, even as audios with less impressive stats received praise. This audio's absence from TikTok's corporate self-narrativizing could be attributed to longstanding anxieties about the value and function of "background music" that might undermine TikTok's positioning as a "real" music industry player. But "Monkeys Spinning Monkeys" is undeniably a TikTok hit; through it this paper seeks to reframe TikTok as purveyor of a newly-foregrounded background music—or, more specifically, library music.

TikTok's use of audio files as challenge-linking metadata helped spur its own viral adoption as a platform. As other major platforms poached the feature, repositories of sounds-as-resource for the easy creation and potentially-viral association of short-form video became a platform norm. Once a relatively-obscure domain of specialist media production, library music has gone vernacular.

This paper draws on analyses of corporate output—press releases, platform updates, partnerships (and their dissolutions)—as well as close readings of both platform architecture and audiovisual texts to demonstrate salient parallels and distinctions between traditional library music and that made mundane by TikTok. I conclude by briefly suggesting how TikTok's library music is entangled in broader contemporary webs: of audiovisuality and an overdue pivot to video, of musical value and evaluation, of musical labor and its erasure.

'What is heard cannot be unheard': Misheard Lyric Videos and the Contingency of Music Listening

Artur Szarecki, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

Despite the rapidly developing research that highlights music video's revival and transformation in digital culture (e.g. Feishauer, 2021; Korsgaard 2017; Rogers et al. 2023a, 2023b; Shaviro 2021; Vernallis 2013), misheard lyrics videos have not met with consistent analytical scrutiny. At best, they are approached as a variation on a more established format of the lyric video (Korsgaard 2019), however, while both share some similarities, each appears to have its own specificity. In this presentation, I will attempt to address this gap in knowledge by providing preliminary insights on misheard lyrics videos, using one of the earliest and most successful examples, Nightwish's "Wishmaster," as my case study. First, I will situate it within digital audiovisual media culture to show how its conventions and aesthetics reflect wider trends connected to Web 2.0 and the rise of participatory culture. Then I will elaborate on its specificity and cultural significance, arguing that by making the listeners-viewers directly experience how visual inputs co-constitute what is heard, misheard lyrics videos bring our attention to the nature of music listening itself, making us encounter our own listening as a multisensory and materially contingent process.

Plenary (17:45–19:00)

Algorithmic Echoes: AI, Creativity, and the Reconfiguration of Musical Engagement in Digital Platforms
Júlia Durand, Vinicius de Aguiar, and André Malhado, NOVA University Lisbon

This panel examines the intricate entanglement of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital platforms in contemporary music dissemination, with particular attention to the cultural, aesthetic, and social challenges that traverse diverse domains of musical production and reception. Central to these discussions is the tension between creativity and automation, as AI's growing capacity to generate, recommend, and categorize music increasingly destabilizes established boundaries between originality and formula, as well as human expression and algorithmic efficiency.

As AI-driven systems increasingly prioritize emotional responses to optimize performance within the attention economy, there are mounting concerns that this emphasis may curtail the diversity and depth of aesthetic experiences, diminishing the potential for intersubjective engagement. The formulaic nature of AI-generated music, rooted in its reliance on historical data, calls into question conventional understandings of creativity and originality, raising significant issues regarding how these technologies may contribute to a more constrained spectrum of musical expression.

The panel also investigates the shifting dynamics of communal musical engagement in online and interactive contexts. AI-powered digital platforms facilitate new participatory practices while simultaneously reshaping how musical performance and skill are evaluated, moving the discourse away from collective, intersubjective interpretations toward more individualized, platform-mediated experiences. This transformation prompts broader reflections on the future of collective music-making and listening in algorithmically governed environments.

By critically interrogating the implications of an increasingly algorithmic musical landscape, this panel foregrounds the complex intersections of music, technology, and culture, inviting a nuanced exploration of AI's pervasive influence on the evolving contours of musical creativity and engagement.

saturday 21st june 2025

7a. Ethnographies of music (un)sharing (11:00–12:15, Auditorium 3)

Technological Disobedience in Offline Cuba: Packaging and Sharing Music Through El Paquete Semanal
Mike Levine, Christopher Newport University

El paquete semanal (the weekly package) dominates Cuba's musical landscape. The one terabyte collection of digital material traded weekly between subscribers provides a viable alternative to a nation-wide lack of internet access. Its USB-based file structure is simple, yet comprehensive and ever changing. Curators who determine the network's content are organized within a rigidly hierarchical structure, yet this content quickly becomes democratized after fans purchase the paquete and subsequently trade its music with one another on privately owned USB sticks. I regard these material exchanges (and the social tensions they incubate) an example of what Ernesto Oroza terms "technological disobedience." Using ethnographic observations and methods of digital archaeology, I reflect on these tensions; positioning practices of *prestar* (lending), copying, and trading conducted between fans against the capitalist concerns of the hierarchy of *paqueteros* (deliverers of the package), promoters, and artists that profit from the paquete's unique mode of categorization and curation. By elaborating on the paquete's role as a container for digital music traded through in-person encounters, this paper likewise provides an entry point to study the gap between online and offline musicking practices. I argue that the frictions this network embeds—its particular mix of hierarchical and egalitarian structures within an online/offline form of trade—provides a viable method to dilute both the power of the Cuban state and "Big Tech's" marginalizing algorithms. In doing so, this paper highlights what simple digital technologies can achieve when developed and traded by a committed community of artists and fans.

YouTubization at the Grassroot Level? Promotion, Preservation, and Sustainability of Folk Music Traditions of Bengal through Platformization
Spandita Das, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi

The widespread practices in recent years of platformization of folk music in Bengal by individuals belonging to and integrated into various singing communities lacks substantial scholarly attention. Being a repository of user-generated contents, YouTube possesses a much richer collection of various Indian regional and folk music genres, most of which is unpublished, than other streaming platforms (Alter and Renzo 2023, Ithurbide 2020). Some scattered discussions on this phenomenon claim that recordings cannot contain the unpredictability characteristic of live concerts (Kumar 2020) and that platformization entails commercialization of folksongs, thereby ensuring their degradation. Citing my ethnography of select fairs and concerts and extensive conversations with select singers and YouTubers of Jhumur and Baul-Fakir folksong genres, I locate the impact of platformization on Bengali folk genres by contesting the aforementioned assumptions. I demonstrate the interlinking of platformized music and live programs by unfolding the network between folksingers and local YouTubers, a relationship I explored during my fieldwork among both Jhumur-singers and Baul-Fakirs. Apart from digitizing old records, YouTubers record live concerts—and systematically stream individual songs with minimum editing—and conduct recording sessions with some artists, thereby discovering and promoting talented artists. Examining some instances of YouTubers taking actions against some cheap songs wrongly characterized as Jhumur, I argue songs produced through such grassroot-level, community-driven platformization activities neither cater to the popular taste nor seek to conform to the standard established by big companies but rather aim to preserve and sustain (Titon 2009, Bigenho and Stobart 2023) the traditions locally. Further, referring to my ongoing fieldwork, I develop a method not limited to close-listening to online contents but that interrogates how certain folksongs (do not) enter the platform, thus combining ethnomusicology with media studies, to conceptualize platformization of folk music culture comprehensively.

Sound, Space, Truth
Hossein Derakhshan, London School of Economics

This qualitative paper investigates how a prevailing mode of consumption, mass automated personalization, combined with the rise of private listening, reshapes everyday experiences of collectivity through a reconfiguration of sociality and space—thereby generating a new social order.

AI-powered mass personalization poses a twofold challenge to the modern liberal democratic order, which aspires to autonomy and solidarity through predictive as well as fragmentary processes embedded in automated platforms. This emerging order, built on minimal autonomy and maximal fragmentation, poses a serious challenge to the foundations of democracy, justice, and solidarity.

Empirically, this research extends the media domestication approach (Silverstone, Hirsch, & Morley, 1992) and explores how Spotify, as a mobile and automated media technology, is integrated into the everyday lives of young people in London, reshaping their experiences of the social and the spatial. The paper examines a two-layered, dialectical, and cyclic process involved in the everyday use of digital platforms, which combines domestication and socialization: (a) how users domesticate or tame unfamiliar or wild sounds through algorithmic personalization on Spotify and are socialized by its especially automated affordances on the platform, and (b) how people utilize Spotify to domesticate the wildness of urban spaces through forming a sonic bubble (Bull, 2007), and in turn, are socialized by it off-platform through its socio-spatial consequences.

The project utilizes an ethnomethodological breaching experiment (Garfinkel, 1967), coupled with semi-structured interviews and diaries, to disrupt Spotify's algorithmic personalization with two goals: to enhance users' awareness of their unique and individual experiences of Spotify, and to account for when, where, and why they avoid automatically curated playlists and how these decisions are linked to urban spaces.

The broader concern of this research is captured by the notion of a 'society-of-one,' (Derakhshan, 2023) which revisits the questions raised by the 'filter bubble' (Pariser, 2013; Bruns, 2019), but fails to answer due to its reductive account of humanity as a disembodied mind. It reiterates concerns about societal consequences of a kind of mass personalization that affects bodies in the city as well as minds via technologies such as self-driving cars, mixed-reality headsets, glasses, mobile listening devices, and other wearable tools.

7b. Digital music economy shifts (11:00–12:15, Auditorium 2)

Market Consolidation, Chokepoint Capitalism, and Enshittification in the Australian Music Market
Sam Whiting, RMIT University

When tickets for Green Day's 2025 Australian tour went on sale, fans joined a queue – a ritual that has been practiced for decades on footpaths, phones, and now online. But as fans reached the purchase point, the price varied. For some, a seated ticket rose as high as $500AUD. Ticketmaster calls this "In Demand" pricing, more commonly known as 'dynamic pricing'.

Dynamic pricing's recent emergence in the Australian concert market is a turning point, marking the next phase in the consolidation of this sector. Previously a diverse music market with multiple home-grown promoters, ticketing agencies, and management companies, the Australian live concert market has experienced significant consolidation since 2012 when Live Nation Entertainment first began purchasing local promoters; consolidation which has been supercharged post-pandemic.

Since the pandemic, Live Nation (which owns Ticketmaster) and its competitor TEG Entertainment (which owns Ticketek) have purchased significant shares in many of Australia's iconic festivals, venues, and touring companies, reducing the Australian concert market to an effective duopoly. The resulting consolidation has rendered the Australian music market less diverse and more vertically integrated, arguably pushing more risk on to artists and more costs on to audiences.

This paper will consider the way in which many of the features of digital platform capitalism have now begun to colonize the live music sector via a case study of the Australian live music sector and its ongoing consolidation. It will discuss the impact of the pandemic and the introduction of dynamic pricing, as well as a lack of regulation, as evidence of this.

Sustainability of Indian Non-film Musicians in the Age of Platformisation
Aditya Lal, University of Leeds

For decades, the Indian music industries have been dominated by film soundtracks, especially Bollywood music. However, the emergence of music streaming platforms (MSPs) has given a much-needed fillip to non-film musicians whose survival was previously fraught with neglect by the films-facing Indian music industries. Scholars have explored the impact of technological developments on the livelihoods of musicians before digitalisation and

in the contemporary age of MSPs. However, a striking gap exists with respect to the Indian music industries which are vital economic and cultural assets to one of the world's largest countries but have been conspicuously ignored by scholarship on cultural work. This paper aims to start filling this gap by researching musicians in India's non-film recorded music industry which has seen a meteoric rise under platformisation and is posing unprecedented challenges to the cultural hegemony of film music. Through semi-structured interviews with musicians in India, this paper explores the reshaping of this unique film/non-film dichotomy by unpacking the ways in which non-film musicians are navigating the opportunities and challenges of platformisation to build sustainable careers. Utilising analytical concepts from critical political economy, the paper shows that, despite increased opportunities for non-film musicians, platformisation reinforces the oligopoly of the Indian recorded music industry and maintains the dominance of Bollywood music. Taking direction from leading scholarship on cultural work, this paper contributes towards building a long-overdue research agenda on the sustainability of musicians in India and enriches debates on developing modified frameworks for researching indigenous cultural industries in the Global South.

Scouting by the Numbers: Platform Metrics, A&R Strategies, and New Exclusions in Talent Discovery
Massimiliano Raffa, University of Insubria

This paper examines how the role of A&R professionals has evolved under the influence of platformisation, revealing significant shifts in talent discovery methods. Traditionally reliant on live performances, personal networks, and demo submissions, A&Rs now primarily scout talent through digital platforms (Spotify, TikTok, etc.), leveraging engagement metrics, online exposure, and algorithmic insights. The research delineates three core approaches: the 'platform strategy', the 'preventive overexposure strategy', and the 'familistic strategy'. Although some of these methods may seem to adhere to traditional practices, this study discusses how digital transformation is reshaping established industry operations.

Through qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with 25 A&Rs and industry insiders from both major and independent labels, the study discusses a paradigm shift towards systematic retrospective selection. The findings reveal that despite their distinct subcultural positioning, independent enterprises largely conform to similar selection patterns as their mainstream counterparts. This alignment raises significant concerns about the industry's systematic disadvantaging of artists lacking digital proficiency, self-management capabilities, or self-branding skills. Indeed, even within purportedly alternative music sectors, the increasing prevalence of this selection model risks creating barriers for musicians who may struggle with platform visibility and digital marketing despite their artistic merit.

These dynamics suggest a broader transformation of talent discovery practices, potentially limiting access to recording opportunities based on artists' capacity to deal with digital environments rather than other aspects of their musical activity. Overall, the present study aims to contribute to ongoing scholarly debates on digital intermediation and cultural gatekeeping, offering insights into the evolving role of A&Rs as cultural intermediaries in a context dominated by algorithmic curation and user-generated content, ultimately advocating for a more inclusive approach to talent discovery beyond platform metrics.

Keynote respondents (13:45–15:15, Auditorium 2)
Holly Rogers, Goldsmiths, University of London; Francesca Sobande, Cardiff University

Please post and comment on the Padlet (link at mocren.org/programme) before this session!

Open roundtable: what's next? (15:45–16:45, Auditorium 2)