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# The Music Industry and The Internet: The Effects of Online Social Networking Sites on Record Labels and Aspiring Artists

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THE MUSIC INDUSTRY AND THE INTERNET:  
The Effects of Online Social Networking  
Sites on Record Labels and Aspiring Artists

By  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for  
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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the ways that the Internet's social networking sites have affected the music industry and aspiring artists. In the past ten years there has been an upsurge in the use and importance of social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. This revolution in social connection has yielded drastic changes in the ways both labels and musicians share and search for music.

I had internships with Universal Music Group and Smithsonian Folkways in their online marketing department and was able to study first hand the way record labels utilize social networking sites to benefit their artists. I researched two bands from New York City to understand how unknown artists employ the same social networking sites. By collecting information from both aspects of the music industry, I could make a well-informed theory of the effect of these digital social networking sites.

The outcome of my research has shown that the Internet has both harmed and helped labels and artists. The Internet puts all labels and artists on the same level, as all utilize the same sites. While the Internet allows anyone to share their music with the rest of the online community, it is much harder for bands to stand out. Thus, a greater emphasis on statistics and fan numbers has become a faster indicator to labels if a band will be a good investment, rather than a judgment about the quality of music. It is an unfortunate notion that the value of music has less importance than the number of fans today. This may speak for a great cultural change in the way people process and receive information today through the Internet.

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**THE MUSIC INDUSTRY AND THE INTERNET:**  
**The Effects of Online Social Networking Sites**  
**on Record Labels and Aspiring Artists**

“What do you love about music? Well, to begin, everything...”  
-Russell Hammond, *Almost Famous* (Crowe 2000)

**Introduction:**

From 1930-2000 the music industry functioned as follows: six major record labels controlled the music industry and therefore the content of popular American music was set by their judgments. The release of LP's, which are vinyl records, was an exciting event shared by friends and fans of an artist. If a person did not own a recording, he/she had to hope that his/her favorite song would play on the radio. Fans saw shows and could experience the intensity of a musician expressing their own art with a whole crowd of people feeling the same raw emotion. For the big six record labels, life was glamorous as there was money to casually throw around to pamper artists and music executives alike. As for artists, to make it in the industry was a result of hard work and perseverance through touring. Each aspect of the industry: artist, executive, and fan had a role to play in defining and solidifying the way popular music was perceived and enjoyed.

Today the music industry has shifted dramatically. The industry has never been static, new inventions were welcomed; after records there were cassettes, compact discs, and now there are MP3's, which are digital audio tracks to play on computers. Interestingly, the source of substantial cultural changes does not result from the technical innovations themselves, but from the effect of the innovations on the population of users. MP3's allow people to listen to music wherever they are. From personal MP3 players, to cellular phones, people listen to music in any location plugged in to their headphones. At his/her own personal computer, users can share music online by sending files to each

other or listening from social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. The use of such social networking sites causes people to interact superficially instead of personally. Today music has become a personal experience instead of a communal experience. Research shows online social networking sites have become the primary tool for record labels and artists reiterates the validity that online sites have become the number one location for people to interact in general (Bailis, DeVito 2010).

I was inspired to research the topic of how the Internet's social networking sites affect the music industry because I love music. To me, music is both a personal and social aspect of my life. I am constantly listening to music; when I wake up, when I go to bed, when I walk to class by myself, when I am doing homework, and when I want to drown out the noise around me. In this sense, music isolates me, as I get lost in a world of beautiful lyrics and harmonies. But on the other hand, I love to share music. I always ask friends and family members for suggestions of new music, and I offer recommendations in exchange. It is a reciprocal interaction, and I am drawn to people who share similar tastes in music with me.

At first, I wanted to understand the life of a musician: the goals and the inspiration behind writing and performing songs. My brother is in a band, and I look up to him as he tries to turn music into a sustainable lifestyle. But, then the idea evolved to incorporate my two internships at Universal Music Group and Smithsonian Folkways to understand different aspects of the music industry: aspiring artists and record labels. Finally, the two ideas merged into what my research has actually been about, which is the effects of online social networking sites on record labels and unknown artists. How do record labels find new music? How do record labels control their artist's music by avoiding piracy and

leaks? How has the culture of illegal downloading affected the music industry in sales? How do labels utilize social networking sites to promote their artists? How do artists use social networking sites to increase fans and to entice labels to have interest in them? Does the use of the Internet take away the necessity of record labels for artists?

### **Methodology:**

The methodology for this thesis is not based on typical anthropological research techniques. Traditionally, anthropologists seek out a group or community of people and live among them, becoming a participant observer. To become a successful participant observer, an anthropologist must be an insider while still being an outsider. Living amongst a community leads to formal and informal interviews, field notes, and sometimes surveys or other techniques. Research for anthropologists has begun to change, moving into city settings, gaining sub-fields such as Applied Anthropology. For my research, the Internet is my primary field. But what sort of community is the Internet? How do you research the Internet? What sources are trustworthy? These questions will continue to arise in the course of my study. The Internet is a community that defies borders, space, and location; it is not just for learning about and sharing music, but also for people to connect and share thoughts and their own work.

A portion of my thesis began before I started conducting field research. My two internships at record labels in their online marketing and media departments were the beginning of this project. I did not take field notes at either company, but I have vivid memories of what I did and I was able to conduct interviews with my supervisors after leaving. At Universal Music Group, my days consisted of updating Facebook and



MySpace pages of various artists, making daily reports of artist progress on iTunes ranks, researching blogs, writing blurbs to promote “albums of the day”, and so forth. At Smithsonian Folkways, I did similar tasks. I updated artist Facebook pages. I searched for Smithsonian artists online to see where the music was being played or mentioned and determined whether the websites had permission to stream Folkways’ songs. The labels themselves are exact opposites: UMG is one of the Big Four; artists are on the radio and the top 100 of iTunes. Folkways on the other hand is a non-profit label that does not sign current artists but wants to preserve American folk and blues, as well as world music of different countries. Artists include Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, but only certain recordings, not all their work. While UMG is run as a big business, ethnomusicologists run Folkways. The internships left me with useful contacts to interview and a first-hand look into the evolving world of record labels.

Participant observation is a key component in traditional anthropological research. My internships were a type of participant observation, but the true participant observation came from my involvement with the two bands: Love and Logic, and Jon Sandler and the Fancy Band. My brother, Paul Canetti, is the lead singer and guitarist of Love and Logic, so by default I have been a participant observer of his music and work since I was a child. From one band to the next, his musical career has changed. This summer I collaborated with his band and Jon Sandler’s band and their manager to work on their own grassroots marketing. I attended weekly band meetings and even paraded the streets of New York City early one morning to put signs up in the subways. I observed the trio make decisions for gigs, their Facebook pages, clothes to wear, website updates, image makeovers and so forth. Since I play no instrument nor am I part of the band, there were things I could not

participate in, but I did help set up at gigs and run the merchandise table.

As an anthropologist I have to consider that working closely with my brother and his friends could produce a bias. It is a challenge to look at both bands objectively and be able to write in a professional tone. I have to censor my own feelings to give an honest evaluation of how both bands utilize the Internet and what sort of results their use of the Internet is yielding. It is a test to be able to remove myself from a group of friends but is helpful for future studies. I must note that while interviewing with my past employers, I had to respect sentiments that they tell me in confidentiality, and understand that during the interview they represent the label that they work for and so their answers are not necessarily their opinion but the labels' point of view.

Informal and formal interviews came from my contacts at UMG and Folkways, the band members, and band manager. I listened and read interviews of famous musicians, but these I did not conduct myself. Using a wide range of methodological techniques has produced for a broad range of information to help with my research and analysis of the current music industry.

### **Chapter Breakdown:**

The remainder of this thesis is broken down into three chapters and a conclusion. Each will explain a different aspect of the current music industry and popular music culture: the former control by big labels, the Internet's power and use, and how artists today utilize the Internet. The first chapter predominately focuses on a literature review of books, scholarly articles, and magazine articles. By reading what other researchers have written on the subject matter, I can guide my study with the same focus and have

data to which I can compare my own. The chapter includes the history of the music industry, the major labels and the “old wave” method of signing artists and marketing them so that they become famous. The chapter incorporates a cross-cultural comparison of bands in Japan and England and their approach to musical fame. The rest of the chapter will introduce the Internet and the websites that have affected musicians worldwide: YouTube, Facebook, and Napster.

The second chapter delves into my time at Smithsonian Folkways and Universal Music Group. Here I compare and contrast their corporate histories and missions as record labels, and the effect the Internet has had on their artists and their business success. The information from my interviews will be intertwined with an explanation of the ways they employ the Internet, whether those uses are for finding artists or the marketing of already signed musicians.

The third chapter introduces the two bands: Love and Logic and Jon Sandler and the Fancy Band. This section of the thesis explores how unknown and unsigned artists are using the Internet to gain fans and fame. I begin to evaluate the effect of both bands’ use of the Internet, and whether it is helpful or harmful to the desired goals. The conclusion is my final statement about the impact of the Internet on musicians and music production today, whether it is helpful to unknown bands and harmful to the major label musicians, or if it is a combination of positive and negative features. The essential question is whether or not the Internet is better suited for finding artists or for promoting them, and if unknown artists can truly make it without major labels or if they still need a team to support them. The conclusion also initiates a discussion about broader topics of the Internet: isolation, politics, and other aspects of the music industry and culture.

## Chapter 1: The History of the Music Industry and the Internet

“The music business is a cruel and shallow money trench, a long plastic hallway where thieves and pimps run free, and good men die like dogs. There’s also a negative side.”

–Hunter S. Thompson (Quote Garden)

### **The Music Industry: 1930-2000**

For the majority of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the music industry was dominated by six record labels: Electric and Musical Industries Ltd. (EMI), Sony Music Entertainment (SME), Bertelsmann Music Group (BMG), PolyGram, Warner Music Group, and Universal Music Group, previously known as MCA Inc. These labels controlled 73% of sales in the US, generating millions in worldwide sales. Artists such as Ray Charles and Johnny Cash, and bands such as the Rolling Stones, the Allman Brothers, and Led Zeppelin gained their international fame through the spectacular marketing and distribution resources of their respective labels (Stokes 2004). From the 1930’s to the late 1980’s the big six music groups were indestructible.

The major record labels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century controlled all forms of media: radio, television, magazines, and stores. They were able to gain such a monopoly because they had the money to advertise and publicize their artists. Without a contract to one of these labels, any unknown artists would not amount to anything more than local fame. Before the establishment of the Internet, there was one method to becoming famous, the “old wave method.” The term “wave” has been used to describe the different trends in the music industry that have existed over time. The “wave” of music is synonymous with fashion waves and any popular sensations of the times; they come in waves. For example, his senior thesis in 2009, Richard Moccia researched ska<sup>1</sup> music in America, arguing that

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<sup>1</sup> Ska is a genre of music originating from reggae in Jamaica.

ska music became popular in three separate time periods, in waves. For this thesis, “wave” will be used to contrast the “old wave” of doing business in the music industry prior to the “new wave”<sup>2</sup> of Internet use.

In the past, the old wave method bands started by traveling together to a big city like Nashville, TN, or Los Angeles, CA. Through live gigs and with press kit in hand bands tried to attract the attention of an A&R scout (artist and repertoire) from a label. If the label liked what it heard, the band would sign and the label would control its production, distribution and musical creativity. The efforts of the old wave method demanded that a band drop everything, travel to a foreign city, and persistently promote itself despite a high chance of failure.

Bruce Springsteen, known as “The Boss”, is a household name of rock’n’roll. Before signing with a major label, he toured New England and the East Coast from 1964 to 1972. He acquired a big following that led him to sign a deal with Columbia Records in 1972. His first two records produced little revenue, until 1975 when his legendary album *Born to Run*, took off. Unfortunately the next three years he encountered legal trouble with his manager and he spent that time touring as he was unable to produce new recordings in the recording studio. Springsteen’s experience exemplifies the quintessential control of a record label contract. Labels are needed to make an artist famous, but they also control the music and the permission to create music separately from contract. Springsteen gave a legendary interview in July of 1978:

What frightened me about it was I started to play to get as much control of my life as I could and that’s what I felt slipping away...I was real naïve about it at the time, we had been going three or four years of playing and records came out but

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<sup>2</sup> The term new wave is used to describe a subgenre of rock music that emerged in the 1970s. New wave music is similar to punk rock but experiments more with elecontrica. Here I use it only to contrast with “old wave” musical practice.

no money... Once you become what is known as a capital generator, all of a sudden it's a different ball game... You gotta get wise to it or you're gonna get stomped on... All the distractions, stopped you from remembering your initial reasons for starting (Herman 1978).

This is the typical route that musicians followed: the struggle for contracts, the pressure of making a profit, and then dealing with a label for creativity rights, and controlling themselves so that stardom does not go to their head. "To be a star, that word has always been associated with the trapping, the trapping of the music business"(Herman 1978). Music contracts are binding, and to become famous can hinder a musician's original desires to make music; many artists stop making music for art's sake and only care about the profit, or lose themselves in the trappings of fame and fan adoration.

In the 1980's came the appearance of sub-labels and independent labels. Sub-labels are under the control of a major music group but with a different name. The purpose of sub-labels is to do more research into the "independent"<sup>3</sup> and "underground"<sup>4</sup> bands. Sub-labels serve to develop the major label further by finding new trends and signing these new bands. Sub-labels allow the major affiliated label to make a profit from these bands without putting in their full effort. Sub-labels will have their own staff, name, and logo (Leyshon, et. al. 1998). Independent labels function similarly to major labels, but do not have the same amount of contacts or funds to publicize their artists as major labels do. Independent labels find new music, and many artists will make their own labels. Basically, a label small or big helps an artist because they will have a whole team of people working for them and pooling together resources and time. Contracts to labels

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<sup>3</sup> Independent or "indie" bands exist alongside popular mainstream music. Indie bands are signed to independent labels. These artists often have more negotiable contracts with better royalties and rights to music.

<sup>4</sup> Underground bands refer to bands that purposefully don't become mainstream-hippie jam bands, punk bands, hip hop rappers- a lot of these artists prefer to remain true to their music by not signing with major labels. Many underground bands have large, niche followers.

range from one to three years and depending on how well an artist does in that time based on sales, and fan increase, would determine if another contract were negotiated or if the artist moves on.

### **The Music Industry: 1930-2000**

*Aspiring Artist Case Studies: Liverpool and Tokyo in the 1990s.*

A pop sensation such as Bruce Springsteen is an exception to the thousands of bands that never reached the mainstream scene of popular culture. Two ethnographies were written in the 1990s about the music culture in Liverpool, England and Tokyo, Japan. Sara Cohen (1991) and Jennifer Matsue (2009) follow a group of bands in the cities they researched and document their lives as unsigned, unprofessional musicians. In both cities musicians face the same challenge of deciding how much effort to put into their music: is it just a hobby or are they trying to make a career? They use old wave methods to achieve their goals.

Sara Cohen (1991) wrote her ethnography about rock bands in Liverpool. In the early 1990s, Liverpool was going through a period of high unemployment and social unrest and dissatisfaction among youths. Part of her argument is that musically talented citizens created bands and focused on music production as a means to escape their economic situation. In their attempts to become professional musicians, bands had to figure out whether their goals were for fame or obscurity, creativity or commerce (Cohen 1991:3-4). Band members considered themselves individual musicians, as a counter to the egalitarian, union workers around them: bands were the musicians' outlet of identity (Cohen 1991:20).

Jennifer Matsue (2009) wrote her ethnography about the underground hardcore music scene in Tokyo during the 1990s. As with rock music in Liverpool, the underground world of hardcore allows young Japanese to display their views and release frustration over social demands and societal problems (Matsue 2009:5). The difference between the two music cultures is the music itself. Hardcore performers consider themselves alternative. Performances are underground, so they pride themselves on not being a mainstream genre. In Liverpool, rock music is mainstream; their performances are in bars and venues that are known to the public. But in Tokyo, there is more of a community of rebels and outcasts who migrate towards the hardcore.

Although the bands in Tokyo did not play the same genre of music as the bands in Liverpool, both countries' bands relied on live performance for people to hear their music. There was no place to post videos on YouTube, so it was either the luck of the venue drawing a crowd, or successful advertising that brought a crowd to an unknown band's gig. To entice people to come to a show, bands put up posters, paid for a small notices in a paper or magazine, or relied on local radio broadcasts. As with bands today, there is a difference between the efforts of bands that play music to become famous versus those that play for pure enjoyment and hobby.

To market themselves, bands used the radio for publicity, had newspaper columns about local acts, and reviews written about gigs. Band members wrote their names on the walls of venues, and, if they were actually trying to get the attention of labels they would send press kits and demos. Yet, money was always an issue: if no fans came to gigs, they made no money, and if they spent time rehearsing and not working, it was money being lost. These bands had good family support and friends as managers and



“groupies,”<sup>5</sup> but even that was not sufficient after a period of time (Cohen 1991:74). If bands were not signed, they had no means of producing CDs, so their main passion lay in live performance. One band believed technology stood in the way of honest music making, and only preferred live music making (Cohen 1991:179). Interviews with band members revealed the belief that musicians who tried to write a hit song to get on the charts were considered businessmen and not musicians seeking to enhance the art or reflect their feelings (Cohen 1991:181).

In contrast to the individual artists of Liverpool, the Japanese underground music scene is a whole community where artists are united. It is a culture within a culture. Bands network with each other and fans of one band were fans of another (Matsue 2009:83). Men and women were involved in the scene, while in Liverpool it was predominately male (Matsue 2009:87). At live shows there was not always a large audience, but bands were proud of themselves. Discussing becoming signed to a major label, Suzuki Miyuki said, “We want to keep our style so I am not that interested... If a label were interested, then we might want to, but it would depend on production. It is a chance for a lot of people to listen to our music, so I think that is positive” (Matsue 2009:89). All over the world there are bands with this sentiment. Music is a lifestyle, and making music is an art that incorporates feelings and expressing them openly. Many bands are wary of labels controlling their passions and taking over their music. Bands that are invested in their music and not the money, find a way around restricting contracts, but live lives of relative obscurity.

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<sup>5</sup> “Groupies” is a term that refers to a group of fans, predominately girls, that are obsessed with a certain band.

## **The Internet 2000-2010:**

### *From Physical to Digital*

In 2000, the music industry old wave method started to change as the Internet became the social center of the world. “Those who said the net would kill music couldn’t be more wrong. Music’s been set free, it’s being reinvented” (Lefsetz 2010). That is exactly what the Internet did; it opened a whole new boundless world of sharing music that recreated the music industry and the way popular music was experienced and found by fans. The Internet, some argue, took away the need for the old wave method of the music industry. From a label stand point, who needs to buy a CD at a record store when they can get it through the Internet for free and straight onto their computer? Who needs to buy a magazine when fans can go to their favorite band’s website and see what they are up to? From an artist’s perspective, who needs to be discovered by a record label when anyone can upload his or her music onto the Internet and anyone can listen? Since 2000, the music industry has lost \$4 billion dollars in revenue through illegal streaming and the cost of albums going from \$18 an album to \$9.99 through the iTunes music store, or free through illegal downloading (MacMillan 2009). The classic big six labels have turned into the big four: Warner Music Group, Universal Music Group, EMI/Virgin Records, and Sony Music Group (Leyshon, et. al. 1998). But for artists and fans, the Internet has become a great tool for sharing music, as the most inexperienced musician can publish his or her music for free (Murray 2009).

Napster is the company that started the shift from people acquiring music physically at stores to digitally on the Internet. Shawn Fanning, a student at Northeastern University, created Napster. From 1999 to 2001 the service functioned by allowing peers

to share music free of charge. Napster was not a way for people to communicate, but solely a source to share music tracks. The program violated all copyrights of the songs and sparked lawsuits from Madonna<sup>6</sup>, Metallica<sup>7</sup> and A&M Records<sup>8</sup> for contributory and copyright infringement (Ante 2000). Napster did not succeed in trial and was shut down. It reopened in 2008 in conjunction with Best Buy, but Napster's legacy sparked the trend of illegal downloading from other sites.

### **The Internet 2000-2010:**

#### *From Digital to Social*

The Internet has recreated economic and social relationships for the whole industry. Before the new wave of social networking sites took place, the music industry was an enterprise controlling marketing, production and distribution. Where one lived determined musical success. Journalist, Steve Jones comments, "There are shifts in relations of music, geography and social relations based on relationships to technology and popular music" (Jones 2000). Now the Internet allows artists to produce music on their own computers with built-in microphones, videos, and applications. Teenagers can sit at home mixing their own musical tracks and uploading it onto the World Wide Web. Fans who live far from performance venues can sit in front of a computer and listen to a band's performance streaming live. Fans feel closer to their favorite artists through reading their daily updates and can even comment personally to band pictures. In just ten years, the Internet has made production, marketing, and distribution a venture that anyone

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<sup>6</sup> Madonna is one of the world's most famous and successful female artists since 1980.

<sup>7</sup> Metallica is a heavy-metal band that has been part of popular music since the mid 1980s.

<sup>8</sup> A&M Records was started by Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss in 1962, they were the largest independent record company until becoming bought by Polygram/Universal in 1989.

can try no matter where they are located. The use of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter has become the new place to hear, share, and make music.

Facebook is the social networking phenomenon of the decade. In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook with the mission “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected” (Facebook.com). Facebook is a gossip magazine for real life people. Originally, only people with university e-mail addresses could join Facebook. Now anyone can join Facebook for free as long as they have a valid e-mail address. A profile can be as public or private as chosen by the user. Facebook allows people to stay connected with friends and family from everywhere: friends from summer camp, family overseas, a friend from travels. Members can put up pictures, look at pictures, share links to websites and videos, and write on “walls”. Facebook allows people to make plans and exert their relationships in the public eye (Facebook.com).

Aside from having a profile page on Facebook, there are other pages for events, groups, and fan pages for bands, books, movies, fictional characters and so forth. Facebook members can “like”<sup>9</sup> a page. Today a band with a Facebook page tries to get as many “likes” for its fan page. Those with fan pages can explore the statistics of their page and see the demographics of who visits and likes their site. This is helpful for bands to know who their target audience is, and how to attract more of the same people or to draw different people.

In 2005, YouTube joined the Internet. The website acts as a forum for people to share their home videos, performances, videos of live performances, and so forth. Anyone can become a member for free and can post a video. Google owns YouTube, so

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<sup>9</sup> The act of liking something on Facebook is represented with a thumbs up symbol.

in conjunction with the search engine, a person can search for anything and find anything from the most relevant to the least relevant, and the most expert to the most incorrect information about a topic. From a video of a baby laughing, a comedy sketch, to an unknown band's homemade music video, YouTube acts as a social network site for the whole world. Since 2005, YouTube has taken off as a new cultural spectacle and a way to bond through sharing videos. Once a video is uploaded, it is out there in searches and anyone can find it. Word of mouth is how most videos are passed around; a musical act will promote its videos through other social networking sites such as Facebook, and Twitter. Unlike a social networking site where people become friends with each other and interact digitally, YouTube is the equivalent of an online television, "the tube." If users of YouTube want to learn more about who put up a video, they can click on the user name and be linked to another website. Current pop sensation Justin Bieber was just a YouTube video until enough views drew the attention of the artist, Usher (YouTube.com). Usher signed Bieber to Raymond Braun Media Group<sup>10</sup> in 2008, and has since switched to a sub-label of Universal Music Group called Island Records.

The use of YouTube as a means to discovering artists started with a trend called "viral", the rapid spread of a video, a song, or a person that reaches Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and personal e-mail exchanges in a short amount of time. To "go viral" is a goal that bands hope to achieve because it sparks discussion and videos with millions of views attract the attention of labels and media personnel (Duermyer 2010).

Twitter is a social networking site that started in 2006. "Tweets" are messages sent and read by a user and displayed on a user's profile page. Twitters users can follow

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<sup>10</sup> RBMG is a joint record label between Usher and Scooter Braun, a talent manager.

another user or be followed by a user. For example, Justin Bieber and Lady GaGa<sup>11</sup> have thousands of followers, but either artist may not be following all of their followers. Musicians try to get a lot of followers so that any of their posts and updates will be seen on all of their follower's pages (McDonald 2011).

The use of Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter has rewritten the old wave model of the music industry. Instead of fame through live performance, radio coverage, and magazine artists, artists and fans are listening to music and sharing music through the intertwining of social networking sites. A video on YouTube is "tweeted" on Twitter, and posted on a Facebook "wall". The YouTube video will continue to be passed around and seen and shared by others as it "goes viral." Word of mouth has gone digital. If a person with 800 Facebook friends made a statement about a band or a link to a video, 800 people could click on it. If those 800 people liked what they heard or saw, then they would make it their status and so forth. Bands have fans through YouTube videos and are constantly connected to their fans.

### **The Internet 2000-2010:**

#### *From Social to Systematic*

The past ten years have been a tumultuous time for labels, artists, and fans as the normative way of the music industry has shifted under the rule of the Internet. The rule of the Internet is that there is no rule, no one governs the Internet; as one website is shut down, another pops up, and there is no end to what people can find. While illegal downloading has been controlled in some aspects, it is far from a solved problem in the

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<sup>11</sup> Lady GaGa is a current pop artist, the media often draws attention to her unique fashion sense and has been called a new Madonna. She is signed to Interscope Records, a sub-label of Universal Music Group.

eyes of labels and musicians.

In efforts to keep their copyrights under control, the music industry has worked to keep up with the expanding Internet as much as it can. YouTube used to have all its posted videos up with no consideration to the artists or the labels, but now YouTube has made a deal with Universal Music Group under the name “VEVO” so any Universal artist has his/her own channel with advertisements. If one tried to watch a Nelly video, an artist of UMG, which was not officially uploaded through VEVO, it would be removed from YouTube. Google is also working with major labels to start Google Music. It would act as an online music store where music is attainable on any browser or mobile device. As opposed to the iTunes music store, where music is a one-time purchase and only available on a specific computer’s iTunes application, the Google Music store would be available at any computer. The store is still in the works, as Google would like half the revenue of sales; but labels do not want to split their profits in half (Siegler 2010).

As for artists, there is a lot of competition to attract the attention of Internet surfers<sup>12</sup>. It is not impossible to have many video views and a slow spread of music, but the questions arise once bands gain a big following; do they continue through the same process of signing with a major label? Or, do bands keep with a grassroots independent path of fame? Has the music industry actually changed that much, or just the process?

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<sup>12</sup> The verb to surf is used to describe people who use the web and jump from page to page as he/she searches for something.

## Chapter 2: The New On-Line Etiquette: Labels Dive into the Digital Decade

"I would advise you to keep your overhead down; avoid a major drug habit; play everyday and take it in front of other people.  
They need to hear it and you need them to hear it."

-James Taylor (1995)

To answer the question of whether the music industry has truly changed due to the emergence of the Internet's social networking sites, one must go straight to the source: to the heart of the music industry. My two supervisors at Universal Music Group [UMG] and Smithsonian Folkways [SF] were able to take time out of their busy days to participate in an interview with me. As different as two labels could be from the outside, the inside workings are very similar. My first interview, and perhaps my most important, was with a woman who has feet in both the major music industry and the indie music industry. She works at Universal Music Group, has worked with Sony, and is the manager of Jon Sandler and the Fancy Band and Love and Logic. I was also able to contact a Folkways artist, Suni Paz to hear a musician's point of view about her relationship with the label. Through analyzing and sharing these different points of view about labels' control of the Internet, what labels do for artists, how new artists are found, online sales, and so forth, I begin to formulate an evaluation of the current state of the music industry in the era of the Internet.

From UMG, I interviewed Jessica Bailis, associate manager of online marketing. She has been working at Universal for five years, since graduating from Ithaca College in 2005. Her job at Universal has changed over the years. First she worked the "in-house indie marketing scene." This position was with the sub-label, Motown Records. Sub-labels run independently under the umbrella of UMG. Her job was to outreach to blogs and social networking sites, start online campaigns, offer free downloads with e-mail sign



ups, and do grassroots and viral marketing. She was the head of digital marketing for ten to twenty artists, working with AOL, Apple Yahoo, and iTunes, putting together contests where fans could win merchandise or tickets, and viral videos. Currently she is the product manager, coordinating marketing between all departments making sure deadlines are in order and on time. Jessica is based in New York City, at Universal's office on Broadway and 57<sup>th</sup> Street.

From SF, I interviewed David Horgan. He has been at Folkways, based in Washington DC, for nearly three years. He is in charge of online marketing and distribution. His task is to make sure that the whole Folkways catalog is available wherever fans go to listen and find music. Folkways aims to have their music available online to download or stream through music media sites, music blogs, iTunes, eMusic, Rhapsody, Pandora, online radio stations, their own website, and Alexander Street Press.

Suni Paz, of Folkways, was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Born to a musical family, she became part of the Latin American folk music movement called "nueva cancion" during the 1960s. She calls her music "musica con conciencia," or, music with a conscience. She was greatly influenced by the poverty, civil unrest, and changing politics around her in Chile and Bolivia. Moving to the United States in 1965, she has combined her messages of cultural awareness and optimism into teaching with music. Many albums she has produced have music aimed towards children education.

Marissa DeVito is an old friend of my brother, Paul. Marissa has worked for Sony and Universal in their digital marketing department. She ran her own music software business for some time prior to joining Universal. She uses her knowledge, resources, contacts, and business skills to manage and assist Love and Logic, and Jon Sandler. It has

become a passion for her to be the business side of aspiring artists. She organizes and advises them, books gigs, and helps with marketing and publicity. She sends music and videos to blogs, online journalists etc. and she also manages their budgets. In terms of income, working with Love and Logic and Jon Sandler is not for a profit, any income made by the band due to sales or live performances is split amongst the whole group.

Without these people I would have had a much harder time developing my thesis. I am thankful for their opinions and input that has led me towards a conclusion on the current day popular music industry.

### **Universal Music Group:**

Universal Music Group (UMG) is one of the big four major labels of the music industry today. It has been in the top groupings for over seventy years. I have delved into the history of major labels as a whole but here I will focus solely on UMG. Starting in 1898, Polygram was established as a Grammophon Company. In 1924, Universal started the Music Corporation of America branch and in 1936, MCA started to develop into the company it is today: representing the world's most popular entertainers. Between the 1950's and 1970's, Universal went public and merged with other labels such as Decca, Polygram, and ABC Records, all under Universal's brand. From the 1980's to 1990's, Universal's public stock offers reached 35 million shares, and companies such as Seagrams and Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. were acquired by Universal. Through the 1990's, Universal acquired many labels, now under their sub-label category (Universal Music Group).

In 1998 Polygram and Universal merged to become Universal Music Group. For

the past twelve years, Universal Music Group has been producing records, signing artists and sub-labels, cataloging music, opening record labels in cities all over the world, distributing worldwide, and most relevant to this thesis, becoming the number one online music destination due to VEVO. VEVO was created in partnership with UMG and Sony Music Entertainment as a sustainable online entertainment streaming service, due to paid advertisements. Universal Artists continue to sell over six million digital downloads of songs and albums despite illegal downloading.

Critic blogger, Bob Lefsetz, and music journalists say the major labels are facing their last days of power. Is this the case? UMG is losing money, and music is being pirated through the Internet. But, UMG artist, Nelly still went platinum with his most recent album, meaning he sold 100,000 copies of his CD. A viral YouTube video released by UMG acquired 4.1 million views. Though critics say the Internet has allowed artists to spread their music without a label's house, UMG still holds the funds and contacts for marketing and publicity. "The label [UMG] has the resources to amplify your end goal," says Jessica Bailis. Though UMG is not as powerful as it once was, it is not doing poorly statistically or physically.

However, money has become an issue. Both Jess and Marissa comment on the glamorous life of a music executive. In the sixties and seventies the labels had much bigger budgets. Money was spent frivolously on personal chefs, limo services, traveling, extravagant offices, and parties. More money could be invested in artists to develop their persona and fan base. Now the budget is cut in half and there is not enough money to promote artists or take a chance on unknown artists. Most income comes from touring and ticket sales. The Internet and social media sites are great for artists with smaller

budgets since the use of the Internet is free.

Think back to Bruce Springsteen and the Allman Brothers. How did they become famous? How did their music reach all corners of the country? They toured the east and west coast; all of their efforts were put into live performances to lure A&R scouts [artists and repertoire scouts, a job title found in all labels]. Then the artists would be brought into the studio to be professionally heard by label leadership, and, if the outcome were positive, they would sign a contract and start recording an album. To increase an artist's fan base beyond just their local fans, recordings would be distributed to major radio stations in cities all over the country, and that was how artists took off. For radio stations, being given a recording straight from the label was grounds enough to play it on air.

Today A&R scouts still search for artists, but they go to gigs only after bands have enough positive statistics such as number of fans on Facebook, and video views to YouTube. Marissa comments on the "new age of A&R" saying,

Unfortunately it's less about the music these days and more about their social media numbers and how much a band has sold on it's own. Scouts are on the Internet looking at Facebook likes, Twitter followers, YouTube plays, and sales.

Talented performers are not the predominant reason A&R scouts will go out to listen to a band. Bands have to have a name for themselves before a label will touch them. Jess delves into the topic of how new artists are introduced to Universal,

It's not about going to show anymore and seeing a band that looks interesting, it's looking for the anomalies, see what stands out, what is making a movement. Then research if they're signed and pass it along to the label president.

What qualifies as an anomaly? A song on YouTube with five million views, or a song on the iTunes charts that is creating a buzz is an anomaly. The research ground for A&R employees has shifted from live performance to digital performance. It is not that live

gigs cannot get interest from scouts, but a scout will not go to a show without looking up a band and seeing that they have impressive numbers. Marissa continues:

You have to listen to the public, not about what A&R likes, but what fans say. The Internet can grow yourself that much bigger, but it all starts with artists getting a fan base before being signed because then you know they will be successful.

This mode of discovery makes sense; with slimmer budgets, Universal is not going to go out on a whim for a band that might not make them any money. To invest in a band that has no, or a small, fan base is a risk. “Artists need to come to the label with a package,” says Marissa, “or there will not be enough time or money to get them to the next level [artist development.]”

Once bands have a large following, it makes sense to UMG that a band would want to be signed. “You don’t know any bands that aren’t signed and are millionaires,” says Jess. A band needs the resources of UMG for advertising, distribution and production purposes. It is not only music labels that can help a band reach a goal, but management companies, independent radios, and independent labels, Jess goes on to say, “if there’s a team working for you, then they can reach more people and help you make a profit.” A band wants people to hear their music, and if it is their passion then they want to make a career out of it. They need some income to be able to do what they love, and a team of people, a label, has the means and resources to help a band do this.

Between Universal and the Internet, UMG has adjusted to meet the Internet’s challenges. “Leaks”, where songs or albums circulate the Internet before official release, and “piracy”, illegal downloading, happens with every artist. Sometimes, Jess says, leaks are a good marketing strategy to increase “buzz.” This is not always the case, and to compensate, UMG tries to entice people to purchase CD’s that include merchandise

bundles: download for free and buy a tee-shirt, ticket and album for this price. Then the money will go directly to the artist and label. Marissa sees the battle between major labels and the Internet as one that could have ended differently:

People were introduced to digital music as it being free. There is no going back to paying for digital music. At this point social networking sites need to be embraced because they're not going anywhere. Labels get all uppity when songs are leaked or streamed without permission but they have to see it as promotion. People are going to steal music. Sony should have come out with an MP3 player after the Walkman and Discman but they didn't, Apple did and now Apple holds all the cards for digital music.

Marissa brings up an interesting point. Had major labels picked up on the fact that music was going digital and onto people's personal computers, they could have set the precedent for the future of digital music. Instead Napster set the bar with free downloading and the labels have spent the past ten years picking themselves up.

However, Universal has been making business deals and gaining control of their artists' music online. Universal teamed up with VEVO to make Universal's official YouTube channel, and that has allowed for Universal to control all of their artists' music on YouTube. Any UMG artist video or song on YouTube is taken down and uploaded through the artist's official VEVO channel. But this too has its limitations or annoyances. Jess indulges,

There are rules. VEVO has advertisements, even we hate the advertisements. Even Justin Beiber tried to upload his music directly onto YouTube and could not because it wasn't an official video through VEVO.

Just as Marissa states, people were introduced to YouTube without commercials and without any restrictions. So, the advertisements are seen as a disruption. Even if Justin Beiber himself wanted to put a video up, he cannot because it would not be through VEVO. In the case of Universal artist, Atomic Tom, they were allowed to release a video

to YouTube without VEVO. The purpose for this was to make it “viral,” and it had to be accessible fast. No one would sit through thirty seconds of advertisements to watch it. The consensus from band members and industry personnel is that if a video is not gripping in the first few seconds, viewers will not sit and watch. The video reached 4.1 million views through YouTube, and now that it has also been uploaded on VEVO, it only has 146,000 views.

In a digital decade where time is precious and Internet users expect music to be fast, accessible and free, the major labels have to accept and employ social networking sites as best they can.

### **Smithsonian Folkways:**

Moses Asch and Marian Distler founded Smithsonian Folkways in 1948 with the goal of recording and documenting the “entire world of sound.” In forty years, Folkways Records released 2,168 albums. Folkways was one of the first “world music” record labels with a big focus on folk music revival. When Moses Asch passed away in 1986, Folkways Records was acquired by the Smithsonian Institution Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage to keep Asch’s legacy and mission alive. The Smithsonian Institution [SI] had to agree to keep all of the 2,168 albums in circulation forever. No matter how many copies sell, all titles were to remain available. During the past twenty years Smithsonian Folkways [SF] has continued to release albums and to acquire artists in conjunction with other record labels. The mission of both Asch and SF is to be a nonprofit record label “dedicated to supporting cultural diversity and increased understanding among peoples through the documentation, preservation, and

dissemination of sound...to document ‘people’s music,’ spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world” (Smithsonian Folkways Mission 2010).

Aside from archiving and preserving music, SF serves an educational purpose too. In 2005, Folkways began a “Global Sound” initiative, putting recordings and videos on its website along with educational teaching tools such as lesson plans, and subscriptions to Music Online for libraries and universities. Folkways Recordings also works with the other national museums of the Smithsonian Institution to teach listeners about their collection of world music and the significance of albums (Smithsonian Folkways Mission 2010).

In stark contrast to Universal Music Group, Folkways is a nonprofit label and functions as an independent label funded by the Smithsonian Institution. Since the label focuses on preservation of music from all corners of the world, it is not as interested in “the anomaly” as defined by Universal. Employees do not go searching for music, but artists or their family members or ethnomusicologists bring in projects. These projects are thought to be culturally and historically worthy enough to be kept accessible long after an artist has passed away. People donate and leave work to Folkways, instead of selling music to a major label, with the request that the record stays alive. The difference between SF and Universal, according to David Horgan of SF online marketing is, “...the type of music and whether it is for the niche audience or the mass audience. In the end, quality and talent rise to the top.” People who know about Woody Guthrie or are concerned about the spoken words of Frederick Douglas enjoy the music collection at SF.

For its online collection, there are not enough resources at Folkways to detect and remove music from all illegal sites. However, a lot of time and resources do go into



supporting systems that supply an alternative to piracy. One of the successful tools SF uses is called Alexander Street Press. This company is subsidized by a third party, such as a university: this underwriting allows the faculty and students to listen to the entire Folkways library for free. The whole collection of albums is also available on Rhapsody, Pandora, eMusic, and iTunes, websites that offer compelling incentives not to pirate music, such as a small registration fee to then have access to millions of songs.

In the past forty years, Folkways has been through the same shift from physical documents to digital documents as Universal. David says that, “Tools of the major label are the same as the indie label. We use YouTube, we collaborate, and we have the marketing resources.” The online tools are the same for all labels. Nearly all Folkways updates come through their website, their digital magazine, the Facebook page updates, and YouTube channel video uploads. Ten percent of inbound traffic to the SF website comes from the Facebook page and other social networking sites. The number of fans on Facebook has doubled every six months and has proven to become a great source to reach new enthusiasts (Horgan 2010). Prior to the digital age, newspapers, magazine, concerts, record stores, and radio programming were how audiences listened to their music. Now it is all online: where there are people, Folkways will be.

Folkways artists, such as Suni Paz, have witnessed and been affected by the past decades of changes in the music industry. Under the genre of protest musician, coming from a line of South American singers who raise awareness about poverty in Chile, Suni reminisced about how unpopular she was in the eyes of commercial labels. She said as a woman who sang in Spanish and did not dress provocatively or sing about sex and violence, “...the industry would not touch me with a ten foot pole.” Her only label

experience has been with Folkways and Barbara Dane's<sup>13</sup> label, which then became part of SF. For its artists, Folkways generally does one-album contracts. The albums Suni recorded with Barbara Dane acquired by SF are the latter's recording copyright now. For future musical endeavors, Suni is allowed to record with anyone else or release her own material without going through SF. For royalties, an artist gets a percentage of revenue from albums or single songs sold. Songs and albums being sold on the Internet not directly with SF take away income from both Suni and SF, just as with Universal and their artists. The flexibility of the contract is good for both artist and label, and both are free to commit as much or as little to other.

Although Suni says she knows next to nothing about the Internet, she does know that it has had a great impact on the rest of the industry. For Folkways artists it has opened up new venues for their music. "Now people can hear a 'piece of a song' and buy just the song and nothing else or the whole CD." Suni speaks the truth, now whole albums can be previewed before being purchased; the options of sales are endless. If anything, the Internet has provided more outlets for SF marketers to spread the catalog, and for SF fans to listen. The Folkways followers already have an appreciation for the unique music of the catalog, and they will go the extra mile to listen to it from the sources Folkway offers.

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<sup>13</sup> Barbara Dane was a folk singer and a political activist in the 1970s. She formed Paredon Records with other like-minded political activist musicians and donated the label to Smithsonian Folkways in the 1980s.

**Analysis:**

In ten years the music industry as a business has been flipped upside down, and major labels like UMG are rebuilding their companies under new rules dictated by the Internet. The music industry as a culture, as a life style, has also changed dramatically in the past ten years. Whether it is in accordance with the larger economy or not, UMG has less money to throw around and pamper artists and executives. That has made the process of acquiring artists different too; artists must have more than talent to sign a contract, they must come equipped with fans and a familiar name. For smaller labels, such as Smithsonian Folkways, the changes in accordance with online networking sites have not drastically hurt the SF business. This has to do with a fundamental distinction between UMG and SF; Universal is a for-profit, commercial business, and Folkways is a non-profit record label.

Jessica and Marissa were informative about the changing roles of A&R scouts. Instead of going to live performances, scouts focus on statistics of social networking sites to find new musicians. But there was no such shift in SF because SF acquires new albums and songs through donation. New artists of Folkways are not new to the music scene; living musicians signed to Folkways produce educational, cultural music. SF also works with single songs and albums of an artist as opposed to UMG who controls everything about an artist. The movement from having jurisdiction over music to music being freely distributed on the Internet has been the biggest hurdle presented to both labels.

The Internet has become a leveling field for major labels, small labels, artists and their fans. Today, the tools are the same for everyone and equally available to all: Facebook, YouTube, iTunes Music Store, Twitter, and online radios. The chaos of piracy

and leaks has subsided since Napster; it appears that a new formula for success has emerged. UMG and SF are using social networking sites and making business deals with iTunes, YouTube, Rhapsody, Pandora Radio, and Alexander Street Press to legally have their music on the Internet for listening while sustaining their jurisdiction. Marketing has altered from who has the best publicity contacts with magazines, billboards, and radios, to who is the best at using the social media sites. The Internet has taken UMG and major labels down from their expansive resources of radio and advertising to using the same Internet sites as everyone else.

For UMG and SF, the Internet has become the most valuable tool for releasing music and increasing fans and sales. The social sites have helped the Folkways name to spread to a wider array of people. It is a never-ending task to update new information, search for their artists on unauthorized websites, and to entice viewers to purchase and listen to music. The Internet reaches people all over the world and music has been shared across oceans and national borders. It would be interesting to know what digital music would be like had the labels monopolized on it first, but they did not. UMG and SF have both coped with illegal downloading the best that they can and now they must keep up with the times and continue to use the Internet's social networking sites to their benefit.

### Chapter 3: Aspiring Musicians and The Internet- Successes and Failures

"Rock 'n' roll can save the world"? "The chicks are great"? I sound like a dick!"  
"You are a dick."

-Jeff Bebe and Russell Hammond, *Almost Famous* (Crowe 2000)

Having examined the effects of digital music and social networking sites on record labels, the research continues by pursuing the same themes of music production, distribution, and marketing from an individual artist's point of view. Conventional wisdom would seem to suggest that the Internet must be helping new artists, at least in the sense of being able to avoid the old wave tasks of life on the road, creating press kits, and expending time and money. Not only does time management change, but the Internet allows for a new relationship between fans and artists. The question becomes how do these new tactics of fame impact musician's lives? To find out what it means to be an aspiring musician today, I interviewed Annie Kim, Derron Walker, and Paul Canetti, the members of Love and Logic (L&L) and Jon Sandler of Jon Sandler and the Fancy Band, which includes four band mates. Interviews aside, I spent the last two years getting to know Love and Logic; hearing them record, helping to set up shows, promoting their music using grassroots marketing, and listening to their decision making process. In effect, I have spent my whole life being a participant observer in my brother's musical journey.

I employed the findings of Jennifer Matsue's ethnography of hardcore underground music in Tokyo and Sara Cohen's research about rock bands in Liverpool in the 1990's as guidelines for my own research. I questioned all band mates on similar matters of how much time is designated for the band and music, their musical backgrounds, personal and band goals, outside support, and collaboration. A big topic

covered by both ethnographers was the question of making music for reasons of fame over obscurity, or creativity over commerce (Cohen 1991:3). Comparing and contrasting aspiring musicians today and from the past transnationally will yield results of whether there have been noticeable changes in how bands conduct themselves worldwide due to the rise of the digital decade.

In terms of labels and the Internet, social networking sites appear to put all labels, major, small, and independent, on the same plane because they all use the same, free resources: Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. No longer does the relative wealth of a studio or record label determine whether it will find or land the next big star. In the context of aspiring bands, the question becomes whether the Internet equalizes access to fans so as to attract the attention of the record labels. Today, large or small, rich or poor, bands all have the same tools at their disposal, so how does one band manage to stand out more than the others?

### **Love and Logic:**

Two years ago Love and Logic formed the trio they are today. Paul Canetti, who brought drummer Derron Walker and cellist Annie Kim together for his band, has seen many band mates come and go. He has been in different bands since middle school, always writing original music and attracting other musically talented people to play his music. After graduating from Ithaca College in 2005, Paul moved to New York City to pursue a music career as a solo artist. For three years he played six times a week, solo with his guitar trying to spread his name while working at Apple Computers during the day. Eventually a local producer offered him his own show at a small bar, slowly

developing into gigs at larger venues. Paul acquired a backing band to release a full-length solo album. But after a while, Paul says “I was fighting my own genre, wanting to create more rock-oriented music that was too ‘rocky’ for a singer-songwriter.” That is when Paul started looking for his new band mates. Paul found Annie and Derron via Facebook friends of friends. Now after two years, Love and Logic is no longer Paul’s band, but all three of them feel an equal commitment.

The three band mates come from very different backgrounds. Paul is 28 and classically trained in piano, having taken formal lessons until he entered college. He is self-taught in guitar and bass. His first time on any stage was as Peter Pan in the third grade. He has been in a band since age eleven, and sang in choirs and A Capella groups throughout high school and college. He has written hundreds of songs and has always played his originals in all of his bands. Annie is 32; she started playing piano at age 3 and cello at age 9. She went to Indiana University for a bachelor’s degree in piano and then on to The Juilliard School for a masters and doctorate in piano. She used to tour individually to play classical piano, but did not enjoy the lifestyle. Love and Logic is her first pop-rock band. Derron is 25. His love for drums is explained perfectly in his words, “I never got involved in the drums, the drums picked me.” Derron started playing drums with pens and sticks as a toddler, he joined a jazz band in middle school and played through high school. He has never stopped playing drums. As pictured on the next page, the Love and Logic trio is a diverse band that brings together different upbringings and cultures.



**Figure 1- Derron Walker, Paul Canetti, and Annie Kim in a photo from their official website.**

Love and Logic designate two days a week to come together as a band and work. Currently they are in the process of recording their first full-length album. A year ago they decided to schedule fewer gigs and focus more on building their fan base and spreading their name and music farther afield than New York City fans and family. Their efforts to make a name reached a standstill, where people would come to hear them perform, but they were not additional, new fans. In order to expand their fan base, they have employed the Internet, using YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter as much as they can. They have made many “viral videos”<sup>14</sup> and are constantly uploading songs, pictures and messages onto the Internet. Paul explains,

Tons of effort for rehearsing, traveling, setting up, playing, setting down, and so far not much to show for those live performances especially when compared to our YouTube videos or even spending a couple of hours on Twitter.

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<sup>14</sup> Viral videos refer to the act of releasing a video on the Internet in hopes it will spread around fast, like a virus.



Paul has worked with every tactic he can, and he finds the Internet social networking sites have yielded the best results for acquiring new fans around the world.

At first, Paul wrote all the music: the instrumental parts, the harmony, and the lyrics. As the three of them started to feel comfortable with each other as musicians, they became more collaborative in creating their music. As Annie puts it, “in the beginning Paul wrote 99% of songs and had them all arranged. But for the new album, we all came together to put in our ideas and listen together as a whole.” Being able to work together and have everyone participate actively has made Love and Logic a cohesive team. As band mates have come and gone before in Paul’s musical career, it seems all members of Love and Logic are on the same wavelength in terms of dedication and goals.

During the other five days of the week, Love and Logic has to support themselves financially. Annie has financial support from her husband, but she also teaches private cello and piano lessons on the weekdays and weekends. Derron teaches private drumming lessons and works at a hospital, as a mental health counselor for adolescents. Paul offers at-home technical support and lessons for Apple computers and mobile devices. He also launched a tech startup company that creates iPad<sup>15</sup> applications for publication. He does creative design while his partners do technical coding and functioning. Paul is multi-talented, but his passion lies in writing, playing, and being around music, “I am an entrepreneur at heart, so the band is one among many businesses I run. It just also happens to be the one I feel strongest about.”

To do what they do, Love and Logic has a support network of family and friends. Paul’s parents allow the band to come over two days a week to use their basement, now

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<sup>15</sup> An iPad is an Apple Computers product that is a touch screen device that can connect to the Internet, play videos, games and songs. It is similar to a laptop but smaller, more portable, and with a small amount of memory.

converted into a recording studio, to record songs and shoot videos. When they are not using his parent's basement, the band rents rehearsal space in Brooklyn to practice before gigs. Annie says, "My friends are so happy that I can do what I want to do because they can't. They are nothing but positive." This sentiment is felt unanimously amongst the three members. Many friends look up to them as they live atypical lives out of offices and cubicles. In this regard, Paul says,

Everyone is supportive...The people around us believe in what we're doing, I think every one of my friends knows all our lyrics by heart. I think being an adult chasing such an arduous dream can strike people as crazy or even stupid, but we are able to silence them by having them listen.

Just as their music inspires their family and friends, having such strong support encourages Paul, Derron, and Annie that their music will be well received around the world. Paul goes on to say, "We want to reach everyone. Niche does not interest us, we want a wide range of listeners."

Without bringing in any money, how long can Love and Logic support themselves? In Liverpool and Tokyo, bands eventually had to put their music behind them and focus on a sustainable career. At this juncture, Paul says,

At the end of the day, this needs to be a business, and businesses need to make money. We have not found a way to monetize any of our successes, and I think a label could help with that. We are the "music" and they are the "business" in "music business."

Annie goes on to say, "Ideally I'd like to make an income to live off of, but my life is flexible and I don't work a 9-5 job so I can continue to play. If the band became a debt, then we would have to say goodbye." Derron continues "We've learned that when we get all caught up in the future and what's next, it makes it harder to work on what's going on now." The sentiment was same for Annie, Derron, and Paul; they want to create the

best music they can and share it with the world and to do so they are working towards the goal of becoming signed to the right label. They want and need support. When questioned about the need for a label to make their goals of spreading their music widely, the response was unanimous: a label has the ability to support bands with front money and exposure. That being said, Derron is not fooled about the role that labels play: “labels could care less how hard you worked as a band. It’s all about money and they want to make it.” Derron goes on to say, “We like doing things ourselves and our way. If we were to join with a label it would have to be when the time is right and with the right people.” Paul had the same concerns and thoughts, commenting that major labels wouldn’t coordinate well with their forward thinking and tech savvy nature. They need a large indie label with major distributing power.

To attract the attention of labels, Love and Logic is trying to increase their numbers of video views, Facebook likes, and Twitter followers. Sources from Universal Music Group said A&R scouts were searching for artists with good statistics, so that is what Love and Logic has been trying to achieve. They utilize Facebook, YouTube and Twitter every day. “The Internet is now. That’s where everyone is,” says Derron, a sentiment similar to David Horgan from Folkways. Similar to the efforts of Folkways and UMG, Love and Logic updates their social networking site pages daily. The three band mates split duties of uploading pictures on Facebook, and “tweeting” people to make sure their presence is known on social networking sites. This task is divided amongst them. They make updates as often as possible.

They use Facebook to create discussion amongst fans. They have 1,482 “likes” on their Facebook page. They use Twitter to personally interact with fans. They have 568

Twitter followers, and to get more they find famous artists who have a similar musical sound and then send messages to the latter's followers about Love and Logic, an indie rock band that they might be interested in. Twitter is useful for sharing links, similar to YouTube. Most of Love and Logic's online success has come from YouTube and the three "viral videos" they made. Paul declares,

YouTube has been amazing for us, there is a viral potential there that no other social media outlet provides. Part of the YouTube culture is to share links, so that's the best place to have something spread. They also have great analytical tools that we use to see what types of people are watching.

For YouTube users, there are statistics behind the videos that Love and Logic can study to see what demographic their videos and music are reaching. The first video they made was a cover<sup>16</sup> of an Adam Lambert<sup>17</sup> song, "Whataya Want From Me"; the video was shot in New York City where they asked strangers to hold up signs saying, "What do you want from me?" as pictured below.

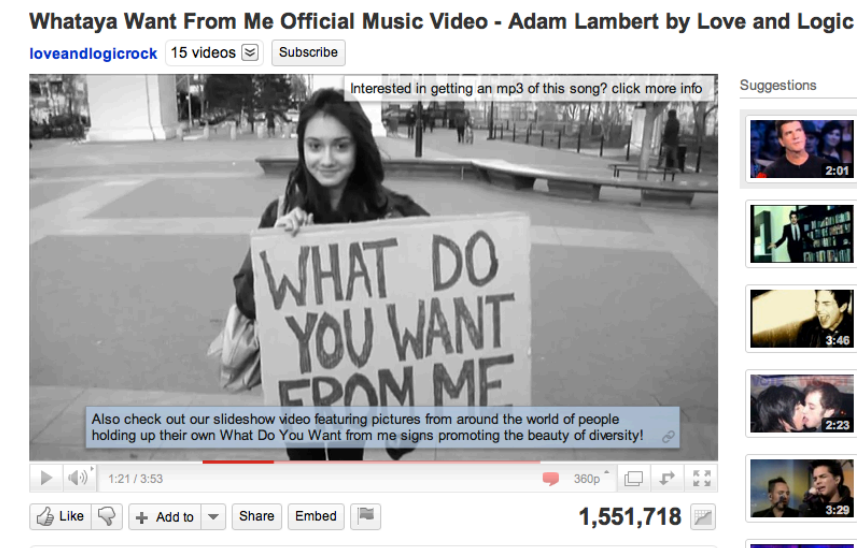


Figure 2- Screenshot from Love and Logic's YouTube page. See view count at 1,551,718.

<sup>16</sup> A cover song is the act of one band singing the song of another artist.

<sup>17</sup> Adam Lambert was the runner-up on American Idol in 2009. Now he is signed to RCA Records and is an openly gay pop artist.

They had gay, lesbian, and straight couples kiss in the video to make a statement about individual's freedoms. The video has 1.5 million views on YouTube and after the initial video was posted, they had people send them pictures from all over the world, in different languages with the phrase "What do you want from me?" Their next video was a cover to Lady GaGa's<sup>18</sup> "Bad Romance." This video was less about a public statement and much more about being artistic and creative. As seen below, it was shot and played back on four separate iPhones<sup>19</sup> to grab the attention of technology fans and GaGa fans.



**Figure 3- Screenshot of their video shot on four iPhones.**

This video has over 100,000 views. Their effort to create viral videos has yielded great success and has helped increase their reach to fans outside of New York. However, not all the videos they made have produced such popular results. Recently they attempted a

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<sup>18</sup> Lady GaGa is a pop singer who has been called the Madonna of the current generation. Often she is publicized for her unconventional outfits and lucrative music videos and song lyrics.

<sup>19</sup> iPhones are Apple Computers cellular phone product that are touch-screen can play and record videos, take pictures, and connect to the Internet.

third video, an A Capella arrangement of 35 different hit songs from 2010. This video has only 8,000 views.

In the two years they have been working together, Love and Logic has released videos and singles online, they have a five track EP<sup>20</sup>, and are currently recording their first album. To quote Derron,

I can't predict the future, but Annie, Paul, and I have worked insanely well together since the beginning. If anything was to happen where we called it quits, it wouldn't be because we've plateaued, it would be because in our hearts we finished what we started together.

As they continue their musical journey, they know how and where to reach people: the Internet. If labels are really searching for new artists based on numbers and online followers, then Love and Logic has been putting their efforts in the correct location. But, as portrayed through the tale of Jon Sandler, it is possible that there are other ways to reach people.

### **Jon Sandler and the Fancy Band:**

Jon Sandler started playing guitar with his dad at age nine. He wrote his first song entitled "Snow Day" and produced his first album with his guitar teacher to give to guests at his Bar Mitzvah when he was thirteen. He has never taken a voice lesson and is self-taught in piano. He performed in high school musicals and played in bands in high school and college. After graduating from Boston University in 2005, Jon moved to Brooklyn, NY and started his solo act as Jon Sandler. View below, Jon Sandler:

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<sup>20</sup> EP is short for extended play. It is a musical recording not long enough to be called a full-length album.



**Figure 4- Jon Sandler.**

Jon Sandler moved to Brooklyn five years ago. For the first two years he performed live every week and gained most of the fans he has today. After two years, the drummer from his band in college, Sam, moved in with him and together they performed shows at larger venues. Since Jon and Sam started playing together in New York, Jon has found a bassist, a violinist, and a pianist. These band members have changed over the years, as the members of the band play in other bands as well. His current five-man band only plays together the week prior to a show. Jon writes and practices on his own and the band mates learn the music on their own. Jon Sandler and the Fancy Band produced an EP in May 2010, and then caught the attention of a small, independent label called Super Duper Records in June 2010.

Super Duper Records was founded by Jon Sandler's high school ex-girlfriend's brother, Evan. Evan and Jon did not know each other prior to working together, but Evan heard Jon's music through the sister's recommendation. Evan reached out to Sandler after hearing his EP in May, and they signed a contract in June. Unlike UMG or SF that has contacts to radio and advertising, Super Duper does not have magical connections because it is a new and small label. However, Super Duper does have what most aspiring

artists do not have, finances and a team to pool resources together. Since signing in June, Super Duper has made Jon a website, they are funding the current recording and production of his first album, and they have made merchandise: tee shirts, bumper stickers, and sunglasses. See below, an image of Jon Sandler from a photo-shoot courtesy of Super Duper Records:



**Figure 5-Jon Sandler.**

Though Sandler is signed to a record label, he is not financially stable through his music. Any money made through live performances and merchandise is given to his band mates and label, so they realize they have not made a bad investment in his music. Sandler hopes to be able to one day financially support himself with just his music; not necessarily become famous, but notes that fame comes when people know your name and if no one knows you, you will not make any money.

To sustain a living he caters on the side. He is also in a two-year masters program at Fordham University in Media Management. He does not tell many people that he is in school because he wants to be defined by music. If his music took off he would drop out of school, but finds this education to be a solid back up plan if his music does not work out, he will still be able to work in the music industry. He has seen too many people reach



age thirty and give up on music while having no other marketable skills. Sandler started school at a time when he was frustrated and discouraged, commenting: “I could be successful but it’s not about skill, the industry is so oversaturated; there are a thousand Jon Sandler’s out there, but how do you know you’re the best one?” Jon makes a good point; it is possible that the quality of popular music has deteriorated in the recent market. There are so many artists today that it is not skill that sticks out but a creative online persona.

Although the financial support Super Duper Records gives to Jon Sandler and the Fancy Band is critical, the true encouragement to keep him going is from his friends and family. Jon says, “Friends look to me to live vicariously through. I’m following my passion, when discouraged it would be so easy to stop but the constant support urging me to never stop keeps me going. I am doing exactly what I want.” The thoughts expressed by Annie, Derron, and Paul were the same: they are all pursuing a skill they love to do, and it is inspiring to the people around them that they are able to play music as a significant part of their life.

In order to achieve his goal, Sandler has been using the Internet just as Love and Logic has been. Though Jon says he is “really bad at using Facebook and Twitter” he has to because it is popular. He finds Facebook useful for showing people his personality and interacting with fans. With 215 followers on Facebook and 54 on Twitter, he is in the process of learning the ways of the social networking sites. He uploads live performances to YouTube and Facebook and just launched a new website paid for by Super Duper Records. In terms of his Internet persona he says, “Everything has to be above and beyond, I won’t settle for normal or average.”

Jon Sandler has not utilized the Internet to the extent that Love and Logic has. Love and Logic has ten times as many followers on Twitter and seven times as many likes on Facebook. The most views on videos on Jon's YouTube page are over 4,000 as opposed to the million views of Love and Logic's viral video. So why is Jon Sandler signed to a small, independent label? It could be through mutual relation of artist and the owner, or it could be through Jon's consistent live performing. Jess, from UMG, said that scouts are searching on the Internet for the best new artist, but a major label may function differently than small, independent labels. If Love and Logic is trying to sign with an independent label, then perhaps they should focus more on performances than social networking sites. Also, does Jon Sandler functioning as an individual yield greater success than Love and Logic as a group?

### **Drawing Connections:**

Marissa DeVito, of UMG and manager to Love and Logic and Jon Sandler, understands how hard it is to become famous today. No one stands out any more; a musical act has to be truly unique to be noticed. Marissa says, "Anyone can put themselves and their music out there, but the market is so oversaturated that bands really have to be talented and special these days." Jon Sandler and Love and Logic recognize this too, they are trying to stand out amongst the millions on YouTube and Facebook to be the band that people like and listen to.

Attracting listeners and fans is not a new concept. The bands in Liverpool and Tokyo relied on newspaper advertisements, radio broadcast, and posters to lure people to their shows. The more fans the better and the more money they earned. But the problems

and predicaments were the same as they are now: how to make a living, the question of signing with a label if the label would take away their creative rights, the decision of whether music is a career or a hobby, and how to be in the right location at the right time. In the 1990's, bands situated in a major city were more likely to be noticed by A&R scouts. Today with the Internet, it could be argued that an artist could be anywhere and be noticed by an A&R scout. Paul makes a good point, "The Internet has made the music world a much more democratic place. But people still ultimately need someone to tell them what to listen to. But more often these days it's a friend, not the radio or TV." Radio and magazines dictated the old-wave method, but now with grassroots and viral video threads, the people have control. Even though power was switched from major labels to the consumers, Paul is right, effort by unknown artists is not any easier; now music has to appeal to millions immediately instead of a few A&R scouts.

The bands in the 90's were highly dependent on live gigs, because these were the only way that strangers and friends could listen to their music in the absence of a recorded album. Love and Logic has shifted away from live performances, focusing solely on videos and recording a full-length album to release to fans that they interact with across the world. Jon Sandler, however, has not stopped performing. He gained most of his fans through relentless live gigs in New York City for the past five years. Is that not what Bruce Springsteen and the Allman Brothers did? While Love and Logic have been putting time into showcasing their music on the Internet, Jon Sandler kept performing; maybe the live performance market has become the least overrun venue and thus becoming the best market to be noticed by again.

Love and Logic has put a lot of effort into using the Internet for most of the marketing and distributing of their music. Their persistence in employing the Internet comes from the fact that labels are all over the social networking sites and there have been numerous accounts of aspiring artists finding fame through YouTube, such as Justin Bieber. Their viral videos have gained them significant notice, but no contact from any labels. Although Jon Sandler is signed to a very small label, one that has no credentials in the mainstream music industry, he may have achieved this through persistent live performances or his hometown connection. The Internet has created a wonderful space for sharing creativity all over the world, but in such a manner that it is only the anomalies that are picked up by viewers. However skilled a musician is, it is not their skills that come across through YouTube video or Facebook page. It is creativity and persona that is presented online. The music is lost online, only through live performance can any fan or A&R scout really know the music.

The Internet has labels and artists employing the same social networking sites: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and iTunes. For labels, the trend was that these sites put the labels on an even playing field for marketing and sales. Neither the major nor the small label has an upper hand in utilizing the Internet. Though UMG has VEVO on YouTube, the public is accustomed to listening to music without advertisements or costs that it is going to take time for people to adjust. For new musical acts, labels are searching for bands with high numbers of views, fans, and followers.

As for bands, the Internet is both a blessing and a curse. Bands that are already established in the music industry have the most power through the Internet in the sense they do not need their label contracts to continue being popular. For example, Radiohead,

an alternative rock band, has been part of the popular music scene for twenty years. In 2007<sup>21</sup> they released a digital album that customers could set the price to buy. Their success came from the fact that they have an enormous fan base and are well known throughout the music industry. The idea of a band offering listeners the option of how much to pay for their album has inspired other bands to break the mold of typical music distribution. Fans could purchase the album for free or for however much an individual thought its worth. The Internet is a great form of expression allowing anyone to listen and be listened to, but with such a large volume of music available, for bands who do not have a following a fraction the size of Radiohead struggle to stand out. For unknown and aspiring artists, the Internet is a leveling field but it is even harder to excel than the old-wave method of relentless live performance. While all digital uploading and distributing is virtually free, it is endless and time-consuming task.

Cross-culturally and years apart, bands in Tokyo, Liverpool, and New York had and continue to have to decide what their goal is for the music they are making. These unknown artists play music because they love to. All band members are inspirations to friends and family and that support keeps them going. In twenty years the stage has moved from live to digital, and though that is the trend, maybe musicians should still employ the old wave method. If the online market is so flooded, then bands should reinvent relentless live performances and show labels and people their musical talent instead of a profile picture.

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<sup>21</sup> Radiohead's album *In Rainbows* sold three million copies when released digitally for any price. They released it after coming to an end with their six-album contract with EMI Records.

## Conclusion: And That's A Wrap

"Hey, Lucas. I've decided I'm going to start a band."

"The first thing you need is a name. Then you'll know what kind of band you've got."

"Right, right. I was thinking about, um, Marc. How does that sound?"

"Is that with a C or with a K?"

"Well my name is with a [*checks his nametag*] K, so I was thinking my band's name could be with a C. That way it's kind of that psychedelic, you know, trip thing."

"Always play with their minds."

-Mark and AJ, *Empire Records* (Moyle 1995)

This research on the effect of the Internet's social networking sites on the music industry has only touched upon the surface of a wide range of topics. In an era when digital music is expected to be instantly available and free to the consumer, record labels have struggled to retain profitability and control over their artists' work. This same Internet effectively has put record labels – large and small – on a level playing field in terms of marketing and the search for new talent. While labels have been set back and funds have been reduced, they are still the dominant forces in the music industry. When I first started my research, I initially assumed I would find the Internet to have harmed record labels and help artists; I was surprised to find that the Internet is a mix of bad and good for both artists and labels.

The Internet has altered many quintessential aspects of the old-wave methods of the music industry: the glamorous life of music executives and the crucial and active role of A&R scouts looking for musical talent at different live performances are no more. For artists too, ruthless touring schedules and time and money spent on making and sending out press kits have fallen by the wayside to a few Internet websites: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and the iTunes Music Store. Now labels and artists alike are promoting

themselves with the same tools, hoping to attract the attention of the billions of people all over the world who use these social networking sites. The labels have found new ways to utilize these sites to their advantage, as have the artists. Ironically, it is more difficult for unknown artists to entice people to their Facebook pages and YouTube channels amidst the numerous other unknown artists and signed artists that are online.

The availability of the Internet sites has allowed anyone anywhere to upload music, but this has flooded the market to such an extent that it is nearly unattainable for new bands to acquire a large number of fans without doing something truly unique and viral. Even though the Internet has become such an unparalleled communication tool over the past two decades, one has to wonder whether the music industry would fair better using the old wave method of fame. Today, it is all about numbers of fans and social networking statistics, but shouldn't it still be about finding the music and the talent first? The deterioration of quality and importance of quantity begs the question of whether hard work pays off for artists today? What makes an artist stick out- is it up to luck and fate? Artists using the Internet must utilize intelligently, Love and Logic is smart, when they made their cover song viral videos, they chose songs that they knew popular culture would receive well. I must add it is a sad notification that so much of what was held in high esteem about America's music culture has changed so significantly in the wake of the Internet. To listen and find music online and through video is missing a crucial, visceral experience of live music.

All that labels and artists can do is adapt. The glorified days of life on the road touring and hoping to get noticed by an A&R scout are over. The A&R scouts are sitting in front of a computer, as are the artists who are uploading videos and music to YouTube

and iTunes, and the fans that are legally and illegally downloading music and responding to artists' networking pages. All the interviewees, from label representatives to artists, noted that the Internet is where people are, and where people are is where the music will be. However, in the case of Jon Sandler, perhaps the means of being found have not changed, with his use of live performing and old network connections. It may be that only for the major labels (the big four) the Internet has changed their methods, and in the case of small, independent labels, there is a good balance between use of Internet and real life interaction for finding and promoting artists.

After six months of interviews and collecting data, I am pleased with the results I have come up with. If I had more time or could one day continue researching the effects of online social networking sites on labels and unknown artists, it would be helpful to broaden my research by interviewing fans and how they use the Internet's social networking sites, where they find and listen to new artists, and how they acquire music to listen to on their computers and personal MP3 players. Also, since Smithsonian Folkways is a different type of record label in relation to Universal Music Group and other for profit labels, it would be advantageous to get in contact with an independent label to learn about their use of the Internet. By getting an independent label's point of view, I could further investigate the theory that independent labels may still use the old wave method to find new artists through live performance.

Conducting this research has raised broader questions and issues about the Internet's effect on the way people are interacting with each other today and how people acquire information. Google search engine has revolutionized the way individuals find information. Not only can one search for anything, but also results of those searches are



instantaneous. People now expect everything to be fast and free; e-mailing allows correspondents to converse immediately and constantly, and if a recipient is delayed in writing back, it becomes an annoyance. The World Wide Web culture has become a culture that expects answers and results without delay.

In one sense, the Internet has caused people to become very anti-social and isolated. People are beginning to spend more time with their computers and other Internet devices than in face-to-face interactions with the people around them. Yet in another sense, the Internet has the power to connect people from all over the world. Facebook keeps more people in touch wherever they happen to be: school, jobs, summer camp, vacations abroad, etc. Through minimal effort, friends can be up-to-date with each other's lives through pictures and information posted. There is an anti-social aspect to the scheme of actual interaction, but the Internet does allow people to stay in touch with a huge number of other individuals with minimal exertion. The idea of interacting online instead of in-person is a new concept that is both disturbing and intriguing.

The Internet is used all over the world. With one search, I can find out the current local news of a small city in India or availability of tickets to a Broadway show in New York. I would never have been able to do that without the Internet. Now, every area in the world is under scrutiny, nothing can be hidden as evidenced by videos posted during natural and man-made disasters. There is no one running the Internet, except for some countries whose governments have found ways to block access to specific websites or to shut down access to the Internet in general; however, one can be sure that Internet experts are working to find ways to keep such blockages from happening in the future. The Internet puts everyone under a magnifying glass; politically there can be no secrets or

hushed deals and movements. Everything is broadcast and put into the light for people to see. Every choice (past and present) by a politician is known immediately by the whole world. Just as viral music and comedic videos are spread around the web, so are viral movements and ideas. Social networking sites can rally people over causes, for example over the recent protests in Egypt<sup>22</sup>, or during the Obama presidential campaign<sup>23</sup>. Mass movements can start amongst strangers from all over the world.

It is not only politics that are brought out in the open, but the Internet educates people and tells them what they want to have. The Internet is the new Silk Road<sup>24</sup>, it is the new global market: a new venue for sharing information and ideas from culture to culture. All over the globe, people can learn about another country, see pictures and media, and hear music and read blogs. Just as the Internet puts the music industry on the same field, the Internet puts the whole world out in the open. It is a phenomenal invention that is the most powerful communication tool today. As long as people choose to use it wisely, it will stay positive and influential.

Using the Internet as a field for sharing personal thoughts, ideas, art, and music can also lead to stealing intellectual property. Just as famous musicians worry about music being downloaded for free to listen to; artists, photographers, and bloggers must be wary of having their personal work on the Internet where anyone can see or take it. For instance, during President Obama's campaign in 2008, an artist found a photo of President Obama off of the Internet and tweaked it into a well-known poster for the

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<sup>22</sup> On January 25, 2011, Egyptians started the successful protests that overthrew the regime of President Hosni Mubarak.

<sup>23</sup> Successful presidential candidate Barack Obama was praised for his use of the Internet to connect with voters age 18-29 during his campaign in 2008.

<sup>24</sup> The Silk Road is a term used to describe the routes from Ancient China to the Mediterranean starting in 206 BCE. These routes covered 4,000 miles and led to what at the time were the unprecedented exchange of resources, people, and culture.

campaign. It led to controversy over who owned the copyrights of the image and whether it was stolen from the original photographer.

In the wake of the Internet, the reception of music has been altered in popular American culture. Today, people have a choice of how to listen to music: buy one track, buy an album, or pirate a bunch of random songs. This changes how listeners interpret the music they are hearing, just as it changes how artists conceptualize the music they are making. In the past artists made concept albums, which means they wrote whole albums with a purpose, each track was written for a reason, and the track order was chosen for the listener to hear in a specific order. Now, that is lost. The culture of how to listen to music and how to write music is transforming. In another study or with more time, it would be exciting to continue studying the different paths of the music industry and music culture and the effect of the Internet on them.

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