

Effects of technology on music



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Effects of Technology on Music Production and Distribution

Introduction

Technology has brought many advantageous opportunities to the music industry in the area of production and distribution. Besides popular and valuable instruments such as the electric guitar and the synthesizer, technology has brought us new production equipments such as high-fidelity microphones, re-mastering equipments and CD-ROMs that provide us with a crystal clear sound of the recording. The development of these equipments has allowed the audience to experience a higher quality of sound coming from both live concerts and recordings.

Easiness of transportation that came along with the technological developments in the sector, has allowed the record labels to distribute music all around the world. During the 1950s turbojet engines were cleared for civilian use, and with new civil jet-engine cargo aircraft distribution of almost any item became easier and faster than ever before. The evolution of the computer and the Internet was also a great distribution advantage for the music industry and should not be underestimated. New sound formats, such as the MP3, have made music distribution easier. Companies could now provide selling licenses to companies that would allow users to download certain songs from the Internet at a very high speed. The music industry also got many opportunities for advertisements since they were now not limited to billboards, TV and radio. Many companies can now promote their records by playing a preview for the user, on certain websites.

Music Production

Recording equipments were mostly used after the 1920s. These electronic devices were very hard to find and also very expensive. 1950s was when electronic equipment became easier to obtain and also became relatively cheaper. Not only that, they were also better in quality of recording and reproduction when compared to those devices used during the 1920s. By this time there were a lot of studios that were in demand for more electronic recording equipment. With the development of electronic equipments by engineers and inventors (such as Raymond Scott, who was an American composer and inventor who invented recording equipments and electronic instruments), studios started to buy these relatively cheap instruments. With these new equipments, studios were able to re-master previous recordings (mostly classical and jazz) to produce a more crystal-clear sound. However re-mastering was not the only feature of these equipments. Studios (sometimes individual labels) and bigger recording companies (labels) started to record more and more music using these equipments and then sold them to the audience. Also during this time, along with the development of new instruments, new genres started to form. Consequently more and more label companies were formed and companies were categorized according to the genre they produced and sold. Slowly by slowly, label companies started to compete with each other and signed contracts with artists to record more songs to sell. This competition between labels made popular music a commodity and in time, these music equipments were started to be used for music sampling or element extraction which in some cases led to lawsuits.

The developments in music production equipments have led to companies wanting to make more and more profit by recording and distributing their records. With these developments, companies started to look for new ways of distribution that could allow them to distribute their records at a global scale. The general development in technology has worked to their advantage.

Music Distribution

1. Transportation

Transportation before the evolution of civil aircraft was very hard and took a very long time. Mostly, merchandises were transported with ships and trains. However, during the 1950s, civil aircraft manufacturers were allowed to use turbojet engines for their aircraft. With these engines, new passenger and cargo aircraft were able to travel at a higher speed. New maritime technologies that were developed around the 1950s (such as the bulbous bow, used to decrease drag) allowed transportation ships to travel at (relatively) very high velocities. These developments made air cargo and ship transportation the primary platforms for transporting merchandises. Using these developments, record companies started to use air cargo and ships to distribute their records to all around the world very quickly.

2. Computers and The Internet

Recordings were stored mostly in WAV file formats in computers. WAV is a waveform file format and it's almost the exact replica of a high-quality CD recording. However, WAV files are very big in size. Transferring these formats over the internet would take a very long time. Even now, when we have access to high-speed internet, downloading a 50MB file takes about a

minute. Back in the 90s, most people used the standard dial-up connection (which was very slow, 56 kbps). Downloading a 50MB file with a dial-up connection would take up to 4 hours, considering that the file does not contain any invaluable (overhead) data[1]. The MP3 file format compresses the original sound recording and provides us with a file that is very small in size but high in sound quality. This decrease in file size made the MP3 files very popular amongst internet users because they are very accessible and they can download them very quickly. With these developments, label companies wanted to take advantage of this increase in accessibility and consequently gave (sold) licenses to distributing companies. Currently, iTunes and many other sites allow users to download MP3 music files for a certain price. With this accessibility, both the marketing (distributing companies) and the label companies make profit from selling recordings.

Also, besides these, the internet has provided label companies many opportunities to advertise/promote their records. With the increasing number of websites, labels can advertise their records on certain websites, or promote their records in YouTube, etc. Certain websites play previews of records or single recordings for users when they enter the website. Unlike local billboards and TV/Radio commercials/promotions, label companies can extend their range to a global scale. Many local and global popular music groups and labels have official accounts on YouTube, Facebook and MySpace. They can simply promote their records on these sites by providing users with full records or previews. These types of social websites are also a great way for labels and individual groups to promote their items. Therefore, this global increase in label advertising opportunities and thus increase in

advertising itself, also allowed the sales to increase in time and bring label companies to a higher position.

3. Technological Accessibility

Nowadays, almost everyone owns either an iPod or a portable CD-player. Label companies can distribute records in several different formats. For example, some of these formats may be CD-ROMs, online MP3 files, tapes, etc. With the accessibility to electronic portable CD/Tape players, computers, and MP3 players, many users of these different platforms can buy records from a certain label company. The main label will have a higher rate of sales when they distribute for more than one platform. When we compare today with earlier days, where the gramophone was in use, we can say that the gramophone was the only music reproduction platform and not everyone had access to it. Thus the increase in accessibility and platforms do increase profits for label companies.

Conclusion

Almost every development in technology, from aircrafts to ships and chips to the internet, has affected the music industry. As usual, these developments may be both in advantage or disadvantage to the music industry or label companies, however I have elaborated on the advantageous side of these developments.

Record label companies have brought themselves to a high position using these technological developments that helped them mass produce and distribute their records at a global scale. Unfortunately, popular music labels only use this technology to increase the amount of yearly profits instead of using it to create art. Label companies now use “ template” music, where
<https://assignbuster.com/effects-of-technology-on-music/>

only certain elements of music can be changed to make it look individual (pseudo-individualization)[2]. Looking at these general actions of record companies, I can say that their sole purpose is to make profit by marketing music. Considering the technological developments and their consequences, these developments have been to the advantage of label companies.

Bibliography

Allan, David. “ On Popular Music in Advertising.” Popular Musicology Online. Web. 13 Oct. 2009. .

Bray, Patrick J. “ Learning about bulbous bows.” Martin’s Marine Engineering Page. Web. 24 Nov. 2009. .

Holmes, Thomas B. Electronic and Experimental Music Pioneers in Technology and Composition. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.

“ The Jet Engine.” History Learning Site. Web. 24 Nov. 2009. .

“ Raymond Scott: Biography.” Official Raymond Scott Website: RaymondScott. com. Web. 24 Nov. 2009. .

Shuker, Roy. Understanding Popular Music. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

Tschmuck, Peter. Creativity and Innovation in the Music Industry. New York: Springer, 2006. Print.

Ulucay, Tolga. “ Difference Between . mp3 and . wav.” EzineArticles. Web. 24 Nov. 2009. .

[1] Download time calculator:

<https://assignbuster.com/effects-of-technology-on-music/>

[2] Allan, David. “ On Popular Music in Advertising.” Popular Musicology Online. Web. 13 Oct. 2009. .