

Attempts to put an end to music piracy

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One of the most popular methods to listen to music today is through streaming services such as Apple Music or Spotify. Our society has progressed from physical media purchases such as vinyl, cassette, and CD sales, to digital variants. As we all know it, streaming services and purchasing individual albums or songs are costly. This leads to the issue of inaccessibility for everyone to listen to music leisurely whenever they want to. With the evolution of listening methods and the rise of the digital music market, there are always going to be people who will find a way to make it accessible to everyone without cost. A method that has been used for a while nowadays to give people free access to music is called music piracy.

According to the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), the well-known definition of music piracy is the “ illegal copying, sale or distribution of music” (RIAA, 2019). The beginnings of music piracy have begun with Napster, Limewire, and BearShare, just to name the notorious peer-to-peer (P2P) networks that contributed to the boom of digital piracy. These programs simply let users share each other’s digital media without a cost, but one’s personal time. Though it may seem like a harmless thing to do, this type of activity is illegal and harmful to not only the artist but the record label and anyone who has put in their work to produce the content. These types of sites have been blocked and put down to prevent users from continuing to perform such activity but have always appeared again in different formats.

Another method that has been used was to make federal laws in an attempt to put an end to music piracy. An example of legislature would be United States Code (USC) Title 17 § 501 and 506. Title 17 covers different chapters

of copyrights, but § 501 and 506 specifically targets infringement and the criminal offenses that cover it. Like any type of law under the USC, it is quite tedious to comprehend and is not taken as seriously as other laws. The most severe retribution given to this type of offense is a fine of \$2, 5000 (Cornell Law School, 2019).

Due to the increase of streaming services, present-day pirates have come up with using a new method called ‘stream-ripping.’ To put it in simple terms, this method involves ripping a track from a streaming service and converting it into a file that can be downloaded offline and shared like any traditional P2P network (Allen, 2019). Similarly, to the previous P2P networks this type of activity is a matter of fact illegal. Stream ripping is illegal because it is a form of music copyright infringement and it is one of the most prevalent cyber crimes committed to date. Although music piracy is not a crime that takes a physical toll, our government and parts of our society look down at this type of piracy due to the fact it affects individuals financially. Therefore, stream-ripping has legal and economic repercussions to it. Thus far, there have been just a few civil and federal legislatures that have been passed to control the amount of music piracy activity. In turn, artists of this type of content have taken action by reaching out to their fans and informing them how illegally streaming and distributing their content affects them in the worse way.

A perfect example of this would be Taylor Swift; she used her massive fanbase to tell her fans how listening to not only her music, but other smaller artists on certain services affect an artist and their team financially. Swift

encourages her fans to support their favorite artists by utilizing official services that are sponsored by the artist themselves. Presently, record companies have turned to provide digital versions of albums by including a downloadable code when a customer purchases a physical album to make music accessible to this new digital age. This is an example of an incentive effort that has been made to turn people towards ethical music streaming rather than turning to stream ripping.

From my perspective, as an avid supporter of artists big and small, I think musicians are doing a good job alone taking action to put an end to illegal music streaming. I know for a fact legislature is not going to put a definite end towards music stripping, since it is the few crimes we hear about and it is not taken as seriously as cyber terrorism. Looking towards the future, I feel like more artists should speak to their fans to let them know how some of the methods of streaming they utilize impact them instead of our government constantly shutting down illegal streaming websites.