

# Impact of new technologies on the music industry

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



Over the years, the development of new technology has caused significant changes in the music industry. The presence of radio and digital radio, digital television, mini discs and the Internet has created challenges and opportunities for the BPI (British Phonographic Industry) and RIAA (Record Industry Association of America) alike.

Radio works in parallel with the record industry because airplay determines to some extent, the chart position of an artist or group. If chart success is dependent on radio, then radio is an important tool to the music industry. To show just how important, 'pluggers' are employed to approach disc jockeys to play their bands music for promotion and chart placement.

Furthermore, the introduction of digital radio has excluded some of the restrictions of area broadcasting so people have more access to music. This is significant because radio now has a larger audience than before and more people are being influenced. This changes the way music is purchased and determines the success of artists and the record companies.

Digital television works in the same way as radio in that the music channels help promote singles through the playing of music videos. Specialized channels and radio stations target specific audiences - this is known as narrow casting - which let every genre of music be heard enabling audiences to make up their own minds about what they like. As homogenous music exists alongside specialist music produced mainly by A and R (Artist and Repertoire), record companies want to target the right audiences for maximum exposure and therefore corresponding sales. For example, the channels 'MTV Hits', 'The Box' and 'Smash Hits' play mostly pop music,

whereas channels like 'Kerrang', 'Q' and 'MTV2" specialize in alternative and rock music.

The Internet has proved to be both helpful and challenging to the music industry. For record companies, it advertises and sells their music and is an easy way for people to purchase singles and albums. The introduction of selling CD's on the Internet has not meant that high-street stores will go out of business as not everyone buys music from their computers. For example younger people do not have credit cards and are therefore not able to buy music on the Internet. Instead, it has provided record companies with another profitable venture, as now there is more access to buy music.

The downside of the Internet for the music industry is the emergence of MP3. This compresses material without altering the end product so it can be downloaded onto PC. Many millions of people now download music for free and burn the songs onto a blank disk. This is illegal but available and at present because of the mass numbers of people doing it, the BPI and RIAA cannot stop it from happening

There are many arguments in favour of downloading, but the music industry insists outright that it should be banned. Their arguments against file sharing are that it deprives artists (and record companies) of royalties.

The money gained from selling music provides an incentive to actually make it - if there is no money then there is no incentive and it will discourage artists from recording music. However, some artists may not consider money to be

the main incentive to make music and even record straight to MP3 format. For example, David Bowie, the 'Beastie Boys' and 'Muse' do this.

Other implications of downloading music are that if profits continue to fall, record companies will take fewer risks and not introduce new bands with different styles of music. This means that music will become even more predictable and formulaic which in turn creates a limited choice for the consumer.

They also claim that it could undermine the record industry. The industry does feel threatened as in 1999 two hundred free music websites were shut down. Record companies say that the industry will be weakened because of MP3, and eventually smaller, independent record companies would disappear and again, people's choice in music will be limited. However, it can be argued that through buying albums choice is already limited. File sharing actually allows audiences more freedom to obtain the music that they want to hear, rather than paying for an album and only liking two out of ten songs.

Alongside the threat of Internet downloading is the existence of mini disks and mini disk players. This causes a problem for the record industry as people can hold an extensive collection of music from a variety of different genres on one small disk for the price of a blank mini disk rather than a compilation compact disk for about fifteen pounds.

The new technologies discussed above have a mixture of positive and negative outcomes for the record industry. They benefit from some - for example radio and digital television, even the Internet, but suffer from other

developments such as file sharing. In order to compete with the ever-growing demand for music that is cheap and readily available, then it is advised that the industry make a number of significant changes that will benefit themselves and the consumer.