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# Music in Consumerspace: The Commercialisation of Background Music and Its Affect on Consumption

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# Abstract

The 20th century saw unprecedented changes in the way western society consumed music. The rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution brought about an increase in technological advancements that significantly changed people's consumption patterns. The role of music within society changed from being primarily an artistic creation, meant as a subtle enhancement to social events available to a select few, into a cultural commodity consumed by the masses. Music plays a defining role in deciding trends and has a powerful affect over our emotions. The Muzak Corporation found, through psychological research, that using music as a background to a working environment significantly enhanced production - certain elements within the music proved themselves to affect people's behaviour. Music has, since then, been increasingly in the background of almost every human activity - wherever we are, we are bombarded by music.

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# 1  Introduction

This paper will look at the way background music has developed from being a subtle enhancement into a commercial commodity that surrounds and defines us as individuals. The role of music within western society has been subject to debate for centuries and its aesthetic views are in a state of permanent flux. Technological advancements have played a fundamental role in the development of music in the 20th century, in part by making music increasingly available to a wider audience.

The last two decades has seen an even more rapid change in the music industry: the Internet has radically increased the availability of and speed at which we access music from all over the world. The arrival social networks and other forms of social media continues to shape the way we consume, listen to and even enjoy music.

# 2   History and Progression of Background Music

## 2.1   Role of Music

Music plays a fundamental role in modern society and has long performed an essential ritualistic role. The inclusion of music in these activities is a deliberate act - we choose different types of musical structures to conjure up different emotions that, subsequently, alter our, and others, emotional state. This manipulation is apparent throughout history and is the defining factor in the way we listen to and create music.

### 2.1.1   The Aesthetics of Music

The aesthetic views of music are in a permanent state of flux, depending on societal influences, current fashions and new techniques, discoveries or technologies. If we take the example of Jazz, a genre that today is considered educated, cultural and even elitist, but at its dawn was called 'the Devil's music' by its contemporary advocates of culture. It was created and performed by those who, at the time, were considered inferior members of society and was thought to be coarse and vulgar because of its rhythmic elements, which were considered too sexual and barbaric.

### 2.1.2   'Degeneration' or 'Faux Pas' in Music History

Complaints about the degeneration of music or lack of aesthetic value have always been subject to heated debate. In Plato's book III of the Republic he "bans 'the harmonies expressive of sorrow' as well as the 'soft' harmonies 'suitable for drinking'[1] as he considered these musical elements a taboo. It is worth noting, however, that these 'taboo' elements include the Ionian mode, which corresponds to the major in Western music and an integral part of modern music culture.

The development of western harmony continued to have a long history of 'faux pas'. Throughout musical history, intervals were condemned or discouraged from use due to

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[1] Adorno, T. W. (2001). *The Culture Industry: selected Essays on Mass Culture.* P.31

their 'ungodly character' or inferior style. One noted example is the augmented fourth, which was banned in late medieval times and later named 'diabolus in musica' or the devils interval in the 18th century[2]. Today it is an interval widely accepted and used in Jazz and avant-garde music. However, intervals and other musical structures that were considered favourable have remained as such and have been established into our culture and mindsets. Music's aesthetic value is understood as subjective and as such western society has moved away from pervasive rules, categorization or taboos within music.

However, this does not prevent advocates of 'high culture' or sacred music debating the degenerative nature of Rock or other popular music styles. Some argue that it is destroying society, our connection to nature and spirituality, claiming that rock and popular music rids us of the ability to hear the subtle natural nuances of music and that for these styles of music to be played within a religious or spiritual context is ludicrous.[3] This opinion has more to do with the historical aspects of music rather than theoretical. It is true that the emphasised 'thump' (a rhythmical element emphasising a specific beat within a bar measure e.g. every other beat in a 4/4 measure), which is prominent in modern popular music, has degenerative effects on the subtle nuances and sound changes that are widely used in classical music, however the sonic characteristics created around the 'thump' are equally as fragile and important as before.

### 2.1.3   Development of Harmony

Harmony and general music theory have developed significantly since the time of the Ancient Greeks, but the way in which we react to it remains the same. Balancing harmony and dissonance can be a complicated task, but the rules created over the ages were meant entirely for this purpose. Composers and musicians are constantly bending and breaking the rules, which in return expands the rules and familiarizes the listener, or consumer, with new sounds.

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[2] see http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e10439 on the Tritone interval

[3] see complaints on Muzak, http://nomuzak.co.uk/

## 2.2    The culture industry

The culture industry is responsible for the production of work for reproduction and mass consumption. It aims to influence our free time and control the way in which we perceive music and other cultural commodities[4]. Modern capitalist society is based on the integration and domination of ideas and norms, which can also apply to the culture industry. Music is often a reflection of our society and its creation depends on the influences of the creators and how they choose to express their thoughts.  Composers and songwriters are fully aware of the ways in which certain musical elements and structures affect listeners, but they way in which theses elements are used depends on the composer's aim and the purpose for which the music is composed.

We are exposed to music in shops, bars, hotels, elevators or any public structure and it is often consciously designed to affect our behaviour and define us as individuals. The great paradox of the culture industry is equal to that of our modern capitalist society. It advocates freedom and democracy, but in doing so it dominates and controls our actions - categorizing our behaviours and character that are thought to be defining us as individuals.

## 2.3    Shift from exclusive to mass consumption

Music had long played a role in society,  but  in  its  'refined'  form,  it  was  primarily accessible to the elite, who could afford the luxury to its fullest form. The tradition of 'composer in residence' for wealthy aristocrats, nobleman, royalty and the clergy has existed in many cultures for centuries. The early 19th Century saw the rise of composers, such as Beethoven, as individuals free of any commitments to patrons. Yet, the works they produced were primarily available to aristocracy and remained, for the most part, inaccessible to the lower classes.

Light chamber music was played in the sitting rooms of the cultural elite and attending productions of symphonic or operatic works were a popular way to spend leisure time and a way to socialise. Due to a combination of technological advances and social changes as a

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[4]  Adorno, T. W. (2001). *The Culture Industry: selected Essays on Mass Culture*. London: Routledge.

result of the Industrial Revolution and the rise of mass consumption, the early twentieth century saw an advent of music for the masses. With the rise of popular music the shift of control went even more so to the masses: music was no longer the preserve of the cultural elite but instead belonged to the lower classes of society.

## 2.4 Furniture Music

Eric Satie created and wrote 'Furniture music'[5] to be a part of the surroundings, filling the gaps between performances of more 'serious' music or as background music to other cultural events. To deliberately compose music to supplement our surroundings and serve as a subtle enhancement to our lives was unprecedented - music had always been composed for or in remembrance of a specific occasion, not as a supplement to that occasion. Although Satie's music can appear uneventful and insignificant, its musical elements are carefully chosen to effectively alter our emotional state.

Satie and his contemporaries were fascinated by the sounds of their natural surroundings and they felt a great need to break free from the rigidity of harmonic rules and structural principles. They were especially intrigued by the possibilities of sound as the primary source of musical creation, making it the defining factor for the ambience of a space and consequently, the mood of the listener. Satie's music is, for the most part, very minimalistic but the sounds produced are filled with meaning and emotion. Its ability to manipulate our mood and the ambience of our surroundings makes it seem as a painted wall of sound quietly lurking in the background, however, it subconsciously affects the listener emotional state and behaviour.

## 2.5 Muzak

The rise of capitalism in the twentieth century brought about significant changes in consumption patterns. New recording technologies increased the availability of music, allowing production to keep up with the increased demand. People no longer had to

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[5] Erik Satie, Biography http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/

possess musical ability or leave their homes to hear their music of choice; they simply had to turn on their radio or press play. This increased availability, combined with technological advancements turned music into a highly profitable business.

### 2.5.1 The Birth of Muzak

In 1922, General George Owen Squire developed a way to play a phonograph record through electrical lines. This was to be the beginning of the Muzak Corporation. The corporation's name, derived from a combination of the word 'music' and the name of the widely popular camera, 'Kodak', was to become synonymous with 'elevator music' or background music for businesses around America.[6]

The Muzak Corporation started its operation in 1934, in the Lakeland area of Cleveland, Ohio. For a monthly fee it offered its customer three audio channels, ranging from specially arranged popular music to news. The company soon discovered that it was unable to compete with commercial radio, so it altered its focus and began offering music to hotels and restaurants around New York City, where the company had since relocated. This shift brought about significant changes for the company, especially after a study conducted by a team of industrial scientists from Britain on the effects music has on people's emotional state and behavioural patterns in a work environment.[7] To further confirm these effects, a study conducted by the Stevens institute of Technology in New Jersey showed that "'functional music' in the workplace reduced absenteeism by 88 percent and early departures by 53 percent".[8] Additional studies confirmed the positive correlation between music and the productivity of workers. One study even proved that playing a recording of Strauss' Blue Danube waltz effectively induced cows to produce more milk.[9] Once news of these studies spread, Muzak's unique services were firmly established and the company built a strong and reliable customer base.

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[6] Muzak, Inc. – Company History, http://www.fundinguniverse.com/

[7] S. Wyatt and J.N. Langdon: Fatigue and Boredom in Repetitive Work. H.M. Statinery off., 1937.

[8] Broughton, Geofrey: *Expressions: Student's Book Skills, Vocabulary and Style at Advanced Level,* p. 59

[9] see study conducted by the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure)

### 2.5.2    Muzak's 'Environmental Music'

The mellow instrumental renditions of popular tunes soothed workers and customers alike. It helped people deal with the fast developing world filled with various technological inventions such as the elevator, filling them with music aimed at creating a relaxed, positive atmosphere. Muzak's 'environmental music' was put to the test in the 1940's when the United States entered World War II. The need for added productivity in almost all industrial sectors gave Muzak the opportunity to sell their services on an ever-larger scale. Muzak's background renditions of such hits as *Victory Polka*, *Deep in the Heart of Texas* and *Swinging on a Star* were played non-stop throughout the war years, significantly increasing the corporation's profits.

### 2.5.3    Post-war Muzak

After the war, Muzak had established itself as a necessary component of American business and was now an essential addition to companies around the country. As Muzak's client base grew, it developed more sophisticated ways to affect people's emotions. Studies showed that the human mind had a tendency to slow down in the late morning and late afternoon; in response to these findings Muzak created 'Stimulus Progression', a programmed playlist of music, the tempo of which would speed up at these particular times of the day. Studies, conducted by the corporation, showed that 'Stimulus Progression' could further enhance concentration, lower blood pressure and heighten productivity.

Technological advancements saw to an even greater increase in Muzak's success with the arrival of the "M&R" electronic tape machine. This enabled the company to switch from phonographs to audiotape that, eventually, fully automated the company's services. By the 1950's, hundreds of thousands of people across America were listening, consciously or subconsciously, to the subtle, mellow sounds of Muzak. The company was embedded into America's largest corporations and even the government – it was the soundtrack to American life. Muzak was played in elevators, airports, airplanes, offices shopping malls, the Oval office and even followed Neil Armstrong to the moon.[10]

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[10] Muzak, Inc. – Company History, http://www.fundinguniverse.com/

## 2.6   The role of film music

When the Silent movies made their way into western culture, a new role for music was created. Film music's purpose was to supplement the features and fill the gaps of silence. It became the movie's soundtrack, representing characters and emphasising any rise in dramatic content. The music would either be composed for single instruments or large ensembles, or improvised on organs or pianos. Film music's role changed with the introduction of sound and speech into the movie industry, beginning with the first 'talkie', The Jazz Singer.[11] Whilst it still played an important role in the movie's character and it was now embedded into the overall experience of the film. The films were often treated as extravagant on-screen musicals filled with song and dance in magical lands or the back streets of New York City. Music became a product in its own right, and the songs featured in films became popular tunes that were later released and played out of context from the movie. Jazz musicians, such as Miles Davis and John Coltrane, played songs that were featured in Walt Disney movies; in fact, one of John Coltrane's most famous tunes, 'My Favourite Things', was originally written for the Walt Disney classic 'The Sound of Music'.

## 2.7   The MTV Generation

The power that the film and television industry has as a marketing agent for music and any other type of cultural commodities or commercial products is unsurpassed. It combines all the art forms and if done successfully can have a defining impact on our emotional states and psyche.  The most pivotal merging of these medias was the birth of MTV.

The 1980's brought about significant change to the culture industry. MTV (Music Television) was created as a promotional tool for musicians and record companies, featuring videos created around their music. MTV and the subsequent emergence of other music television channels allowed consumers to further connect with pop stars and enabled companies to reach consumers on more personal or direct level. The artist became a brand

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[11] see the Jazz Singer http://www.allmovie.com/work/25963

through which products could be sold and the music became a supplement to the video and the artist.

## 2.8   Audio Architecture

During the same period, the Muzak Corporation also evolved by changing their image and switching entirely from background to foreground music. They started creating playlists that included recordings of songs by original artists, instead of instrumental renditions of those same songs. The company also diversified into different fields by introducing their own music television channels aimed at bars and hotels featuring music videos of popular music. Muzak expanded their number of audio channels supplied to customers through satellite services, offering a wide range of genres and themes for customers to choose from. Muzak and other large music licensing and record companies, such as DMX, became huge libraries that designed playlists made up of music categorized after a specific theme or genre.

To create such playlists Muzak hired audio architects. Their purpose was to supply the client with a customized sound for their business and the idea was to supply the demand created by consumers by analyzing businesses with regards to their customers and identity or image. They then create playlists that 'define' the customers, whilst also staying true to the identity of the business. The audio architects use genres as a tool to define specific demographics related to a business.

## 2.9   The demise of programmed music

The original Muzak catalogue was a collection of bland music, lacking in character and energy, but it served its purpose. It was an extremely effective way of making music barely noticeable, yet effective. Its banality was often subject to debate as many argued that its existence came into being only to torture the masses and rid them of all cultural inclinations or even lose hope in mankind[12] - Ted Nugent offered to buy the company for US$ 10 million just so he could close it down.[13] Muzak has entirely shifted away from its

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[12] see complaints on Muzak, http://nomuzak.co.uk/

[13] Article mentioning Ted Nugent's bit to buy Muzak in 1989  http://www.royaltyfreemusic.com/music-blog/

original idea of mellow renditions of popular music. Today it only uses recordings by original artists, which are categorized by the ambiance they give to a specific space.

# 3  Categorization: Music, mood and brain

Once society became oversaturated by music, bombarded at them from every direction, people began to seemingly ignore or phase out the music and perceive it a natural part of their environment. Popular music, or any music for that matter, seemed to simply fade into the surroundings and add to the ambience of the space in which it was reproduced.

People have become wary and selective of what they are consciously affected by in today's mass media and choose to notice things that appeal or have a specific meaning to them as individuals. They perceive things that are familiar because they have the power to bring back specific memories of places or events. This familiarity also affects the way in which music is categorized.

## 3.1  Constructivist vs. Absolute Theory

The way in which we remember and are familiarized with songs and musical structures has been subject of debate among memory theorists over the last hundred years, and has primarily focused on whether human and animal memory is relational or absolute. The relational school argues that our memory system stores information about the relationship between objects and ideas, rather than the details on the objects themselves. This view is called the constructivist view *"...because it implies that, lacking sensory specifics, we* construct *a memory representation of reality out of these relations (with many details filled in or reconstructed on the spot)"*.[14] The proponents believe that the primary function of memory is to select and preserve important details, or the essence, and ignore the details in the periphery. Conversely, the record-keeping, or absolute theory argues that *"...memory is like a tape recorder or digital camera, preserving all or most of our experiences*

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[14] see Levitin, *This is your Brain on Music,* p.135

*accurately, and with near perfect fidelity*".[15] Music plays a significant role in this debate: its content is defined by pitch relations (a constructivist view) that are composed in precise pitches (record-keeping view). Both theories are accurate in describing the way our memory works and plenty of evidence has accumulated over the last hundred years supporting the credibility of both.

## 3.2   Categorization Theory

**"Categorization is a basic function of living creatures"[16]**

Music from the 'classical' period is epitomised by the works of Mozart, Beethoven and their contemporaries. However, in modern society, classical music is a term used to categorize 'serious' music of high culture, and has expanded to include movements outside of the true classical period, such as Baroque, Romantic, Impressionistic and various modern composition styles. The 'classical' sounds of Mozart's *Eine Kleinie Natchmusik* or the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony are ingrained in the minds of western civilization and have become synonymous with high culture.

We consciously or subconsciously categorize all objects as members of different classes or categories. Aristotle argued that when we are shown an object, be that living or non-living, we automatically assign it to a category "...based on an analysis of its properties and a comparison with the category definition".[17] In short, the object is either inside or outside a category. After thousands of years of virtually no significant work on the topic, Ludwig Wittgenstein asked a simple question: What is a game? He argued that there is no one-way to absolutely categorize or supply definitions that include all games. Most activities that are defined as games can be argued otherwise. For example, we might say that a game such as football is a leisure activity. But is playing football professionally still a leisure activity?[18] The same applies to genres in music. Led Zepplin is categorized as a heavy

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[15] Ibid., p.135

[16] Ibid., p.140

[17] see Levitin, *This is your Brain on Music,* p.140

[18] Ibid, p.141

metal band, but can their more acoustic music still be defined as heavy metal? Wittgenstein believed that category membership was defined by its family resemblance rather than its definition. Things are called games if they resemble something we have previously called games. Similar mistakes are made when categorizing music into genres.

### 3.2.1    Prototype vs. Exemplar Theory

When we listen to a specific song we look for defining features in its timbre and musical structures that we are familiar with. Prototypes are musical structures and/or the sonic material within them, and they are the factors we look for in music – we search for examples of the prototypes within specific categories, trying to find their family resemblance. For example, record producers often recreate the character and timbre of recordings made by famous producers such as Phil Spector or The Beatles' George Martin as prototypes for their own recordings, by using similar equipment or methods. The outcome will not be the same and it might even be applied to music altogether different to that of the prototype, but the subtle nuances in timbre have the ability to affect listeners in a similar way and even endear them to the song.

This Prototype theory is closely connected to the constructivist theory of memory, discarding the specific details of the music and instead storing the essence or its abstract generalization. The record-keeping theory of memory is also accounted for within the categorization theory: the exemplar theory. The distinguishing feature of the exemplar theory is that every experience, object, song, or feeling you have had or shared are encoded as a trace in your memory. In the case of music, experiences we have whilst listening to a piece of music or a specific sound are encoded in our psyche and when we experience or want to retrieve a similar emotion we automatically think of these elements e.g. when a person is at a social event such as a club night or a jazz lounge the music and ambience of that place is encoded in the persons memory making it possible to retrieve these memories later. The exemplar theory brought up various questions, counter arguing the prototype theory. When categories are broad how does one know the prototype? For example "*What is the prototypical song by a female pop artist?*"[19] Again, both theories are accurate in

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[19] Levitin, *This is your Brain on Music,* p.159

describing the way our memory works and how we categorize objects, feelings and experiences.

Categorisation correlates with where we place ourselves in society and it is a useful tool to decipher fashion trends. Music plays a significant role in this process, as it is a powerful indicator as to what trends or demographic an individual belongs. Certain prototypical musical elements, such as a certain rhythmic or melodic elements (e.g. variable Balkan rhythms or melodies based on the Phrygian scale) can belong in various genres and because of these elements the listener is drawn to the music through familiarity.

# 4   Music as External Product

Muzak's legacy and tradition of background music as a stimulant in work environments and shopping complexes has played a significant role in both today's economy and society. However the idea of using the background music as a product in and of itself has only just recently been fully comprehended.

Marketing a product and creating a brand has significantly changed since the beginning of the 20th century. Products are no longer sold to us through homogenous market segments; they are sold *with* us – we chose the products we want to buy through brands that speak to us. Music plays a significant role in how brands are perceived and it has even become a brand in its own right. Cool hunters are sent out to identify trendsetters.[20] These trendsetters are people who present themselves differently from others and are 'prototypes', which other people want to follow or emulate. Pop and rock stars are often trendsetters, with their followers emulating their dress sense and lifestyle choices. They have become more than just the music they produce. The deciding factor in the popularity of these stars is how successful they are in creating a trendsetting brand for themselves. Pop and rock stars are multimillion-dollar brands, the success of which is achieved through strong marketing campaigns. Large retail companies, such as Topshop or Urban Outfitters,

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[20] Solomon, Michael R: *Conquering Consumerspace: Marketing Strategies For A Branded World.* p.86

capitalize on the fame of these stars, not only by allowing customers to imitate their style, but also by playing their music in their stores giving the customer a soundtrack to their shopping experience. The retailer stocks or even creates CDs with the music played in the store that the customer can then buy. In purchasing the music that acts as a soundtrack to their shopping experience, they are taking the ambience of the store home with them, enabling them to easily access the experience through positive associations and inspiring them to come back and shop.

The first retailer to successfully capitalise the idea of selling their 'soundtrack' to their customer base was the American underwear store, *Victoria's Secret*. Sales managers simply put the CD into the store record players and the customers would enthusiastically pay for copies of the CD along with their underwear purchases. The store's volumes of compilation discs, called *Classics By Request,* contained pleasant light classical music featuring the great masters such as Beethoven. The store's first two volumes went double platinum, selling more than two million copies. The store has subsequently sold over 15 million copies of their CDs and contributing to the company's profits in an unexpected way.[21]

# 5   Music as Promotion

Using music as a promoting tool has become standard practise in the business world. The use of sound and music has become a powerful tool to strengthen brands and lure in customers. In the early 1990's London nightclubs, such as *Fabric* and *The Ministry of Sound*, started producing CDs with music mixed by their in-house DJs as promotional material for their business. These CDs became hugely popular and enabled club goers to buy the soundtrack to the club's atmosphere, and built loyal fan bases of people who had never even attended. This sneak-peek into the club's sonic world gave people a strong incentive to attend the club and experience or re-experience the club's atmosphere. These

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[21] Ibid., p.199

promotional CDs subsequently became products in their own right. Many people buy them for the material and the DJs or artists that feature without realising that they are promotional material for nightclubs or lounge bars. Almost every self-respecting club or lounge from Miami to Ibiza now produce regular compilations sold online and in record stores worldwide. They produce a modest profit as well as being one of the main trendsetters for the dance music scene in the world. This practice has spread further, with hotels, private members clubs and agencies all jumping on the bandwagon to musically brand their identities.

# 6   Social Networking: a shift towards social commerce.

With the development of the Internet and social networks such as Myspace, Youtube, Facebook and Twitter, a new generation of consumers has emerged. In cyberspace, our identities are categorized by collecting data on our Internet activity. Things we share and access on social networking sites is recorded and collected to create a picture of who we are, what we like and, most importantly, what we will buy. Our musical preferences are also mapped and the music we choose to listen to and 'like' on the Internet defines our demographic and us as individuals.

This seemingly unlimited access to music has changed the way in which we perceive music and in turn how music defines us. With unlimited access to music at anytime and the ease of which it is to publish music, makes it possible to connect with music and musicians on a more personal level then before. Listeners can receive music directly from the artist and even correspond with them directly through Twitter or other social networking groups.

Creating playlists and determining musical preferences has become more of a democratic task. Large corporations or governmental organisations no longer have absolute power in deciding trends - enthusiastic individuals make the decision in consumerspace. Trends are based directly on our preferences, through more accurate information extracted directly from our viral activity.  People are no longer as likely to discover music from radio stations

or other traditional media devices, they find out from their friends through social networking sites.

The biggest problem for the music industry and musicians today is the rigidity of the 'old' music corporations and their refusal in predicting or even following the direction of the market. Music is accessible free of charge for anyone with basic computer skills. Instead of spending hundreds of millions of dollars on fighting against free downloads the corporations, who also (mainly in the US) hold interactive rights on their music, should be focusing on alternative methods. Spotify, a London-based start-up company, is a stand-alone application that allows its users to download and share its music instantly and free of charge and it supports itself (and pays for musical rights) with advertising and subscriptions. By making music free, which it already is to an extent, more artists are exposed and the market will expand. It sounds unrealistic, but according to Marc Culpin of the electropop duo Northern Kind their first album sales, which isn't on Spotify, have steadily declined on iTunes since its launch. For their second album, which was released on Spotify, sales "have held steadily on iTunes since launch".[22] Giving the music away for free leads to more sales.

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[22] Wired magazine. UK edition. Feburary 2011. p. 37 - 40

# 7 Conclusion

Music has always been a significant part of human life, supplementing various activities. It is an expression of human emotions that define us as individuals. At the beginning of the 20th century, music's role within society began to change. The Industrial Revolution saw the gradual rise of the 'individual' and the middle and lower classes were able to afford various cultural commodities, which had previously only been accessible to the cultural 'elite'. With music accessible to all members of society and various advancements in technology, businesses began to exploit it - music became an industry, capitalising on emotions.

Satie's 'Furniture Music' and Muzak's background music exploited music's emotive reach by making it the background and a part of the ambiance of a particular space. The concept of primarily designing music for this purpose was very effective. Muzak proved that music could be successfully used to increase productivity and the general well being of factory workers. These results had a significant impact on music and what it means today. Music made its way into every physical space; background music was transformed into foreground music.

Background music is no longer something that subconsciously affects us. It is a part of us and defines us as individuals. We control and choose our own soundtracks. In a market economy music is chosen for us, but in consumerspace we choose our own.

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