

RPM

Rethinking Public Music - Issue 1

# Musical Currents



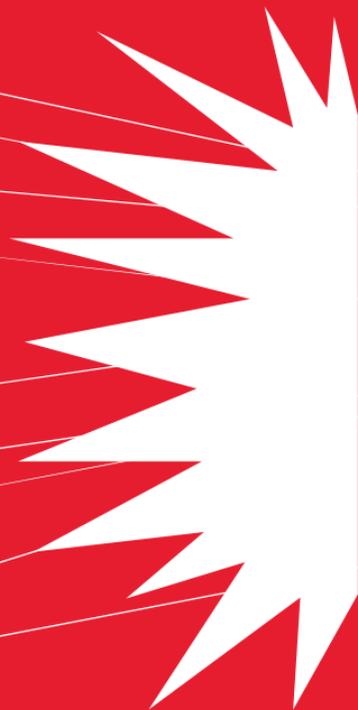
## **Musical currents**

- 1 - **Intro**
- 2 - **A human universal**
- 3 - **That you can sell**
- 4 - **Which created an industry**
- 5 - **That got us here**
- 6 - **Here, as in poor musicians**
- 7 - **Here, affecting how we listen**
- 8 - **And it's easy to sum it up**
- 9 - **We call it Moodsic**
- 10 - **A thriving phenomena**
- 11 - **That has led to changes**
- 12 - **But changes for who?**
- 14 - **And changes regarding what?**
- 15 - **While individual changes can be beneficial**
- 16 - **Perhaps the solution lies in the collective effort**
- 17 - **And of making musical mediums for all people**



HEAR YE

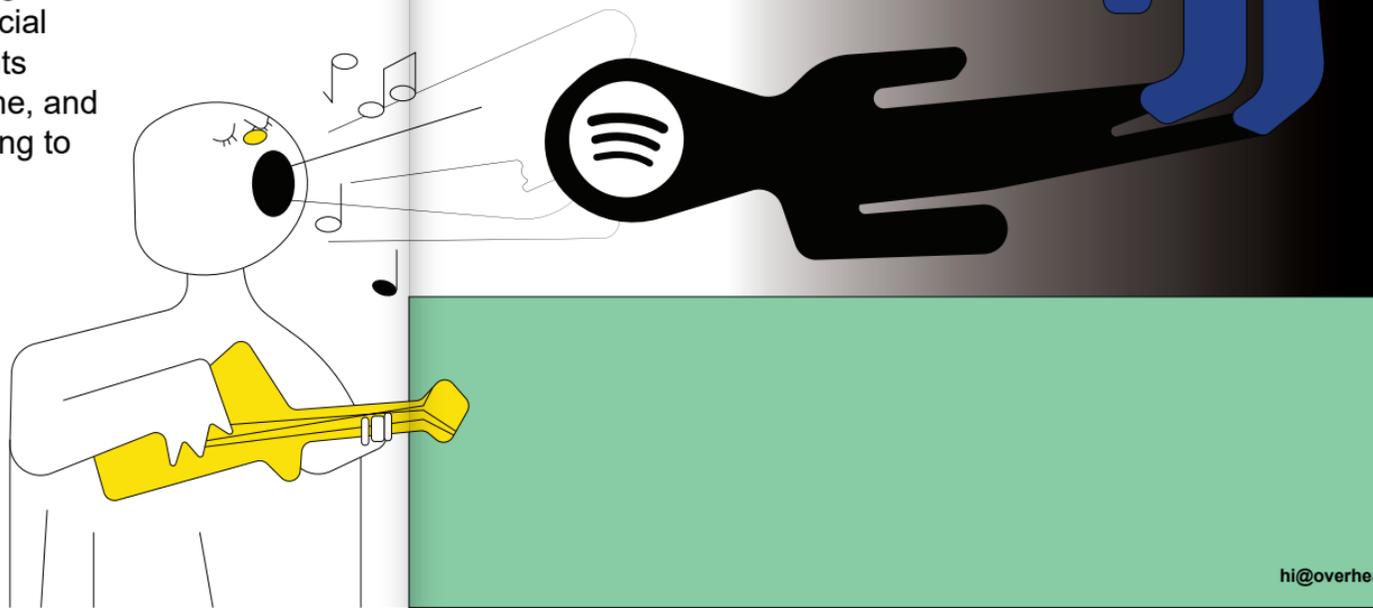
HEAR YE



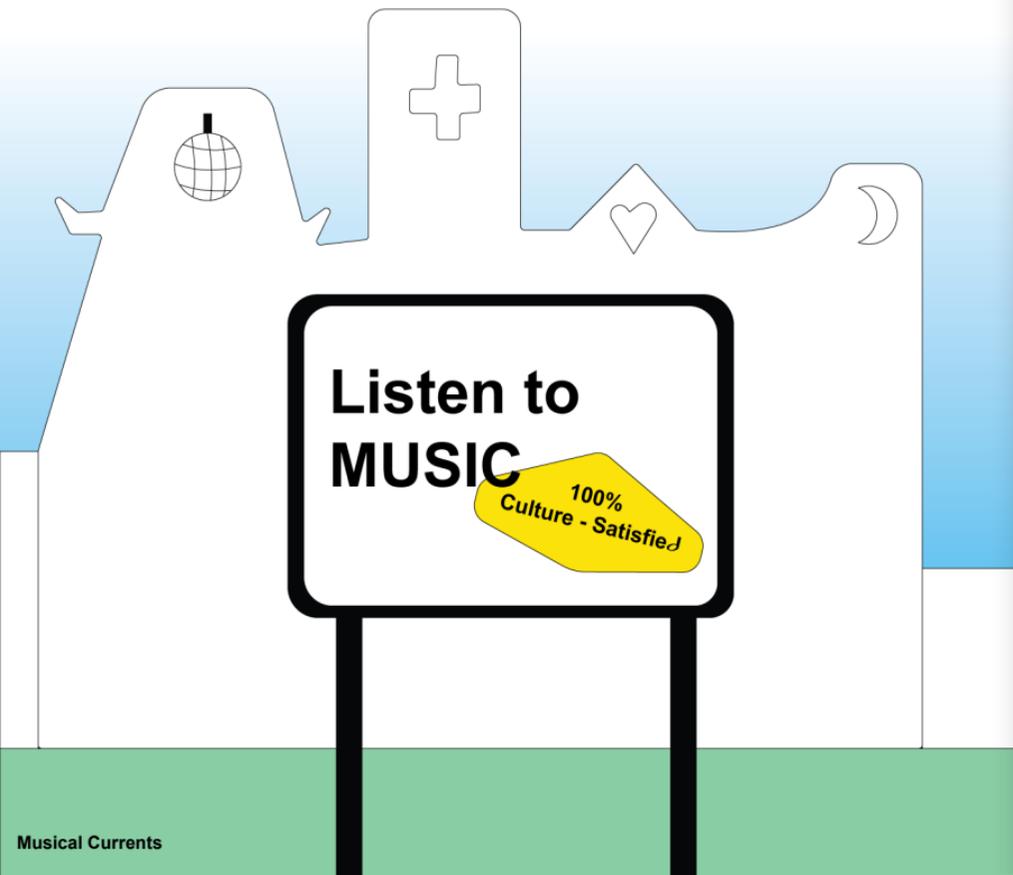
## Intro

To what degree can you as a listener expect music to challenge your personal taste, and to what degree can music providers meet such an expectation in the contemporary music world?

This issue will not fulfill your expectations when it comes to music, though it might make your expectations to yourself (as a listener or musician) clearer. You will be taken through the driving forces, both creative and commercial within the world of music. Musical Currents addresses how things are, what is to come, and why everyone is accountable for not having to follow normative trends any more.



## A human universal



Music is a human universal. It exists in 100% of all cultures.

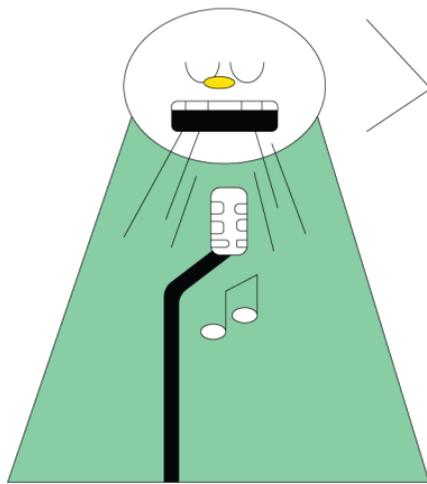
The core motivations for creating and listening, is in relation to dancing, healing, love songs, and lullabies. Some things never change.

## That you can sell

What did change was the introduction of the scary term “commodification”, which gave you the ability to describe music as an item of value. This in turn made it easier to sell.

Access to music could now be a “thing”, through shared languages such as notes and technology. Sheet music became the first established portal for accessing music as a commodity (late 1800s), everything since has been the same, just in different formats (Vinyl, CD’s, mp3’s).

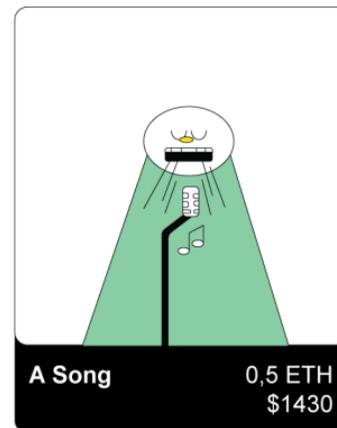
Music as an abstract cultural constant



How easy it is to sell



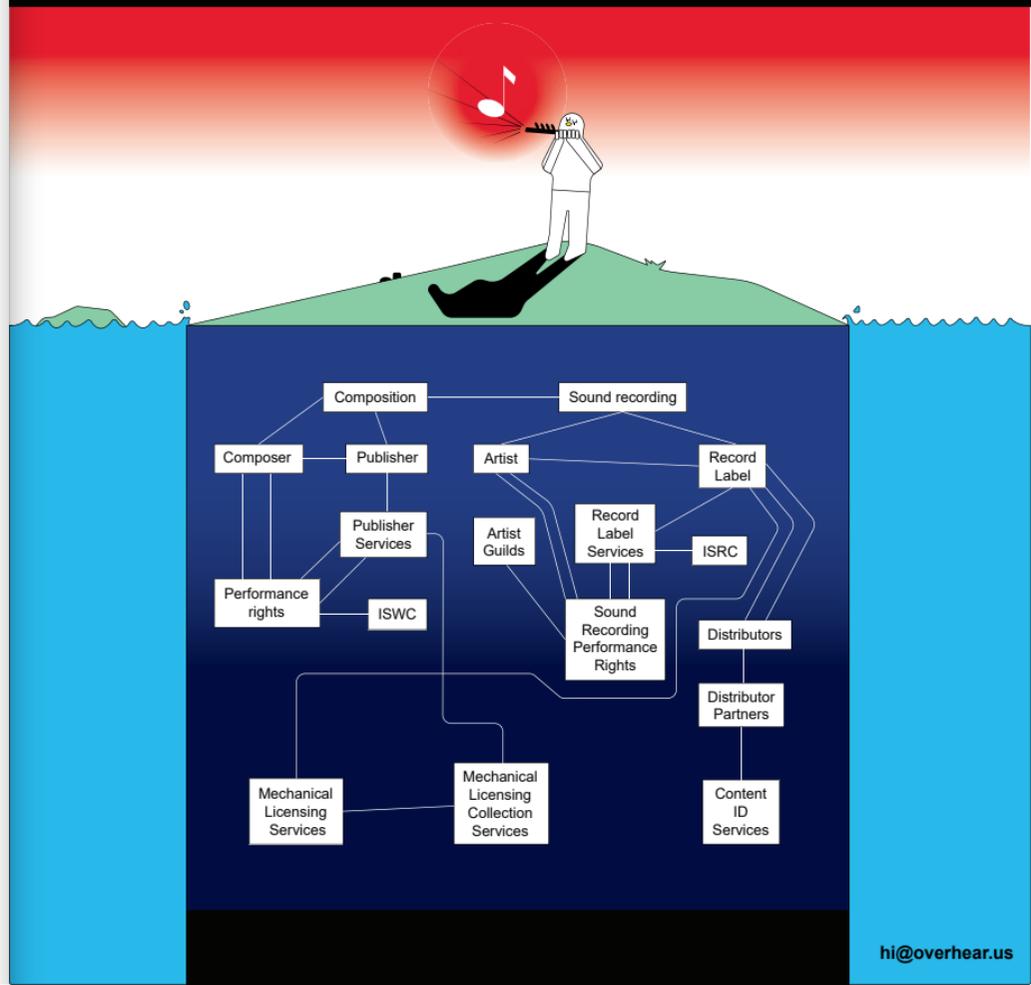
Music as a commodity



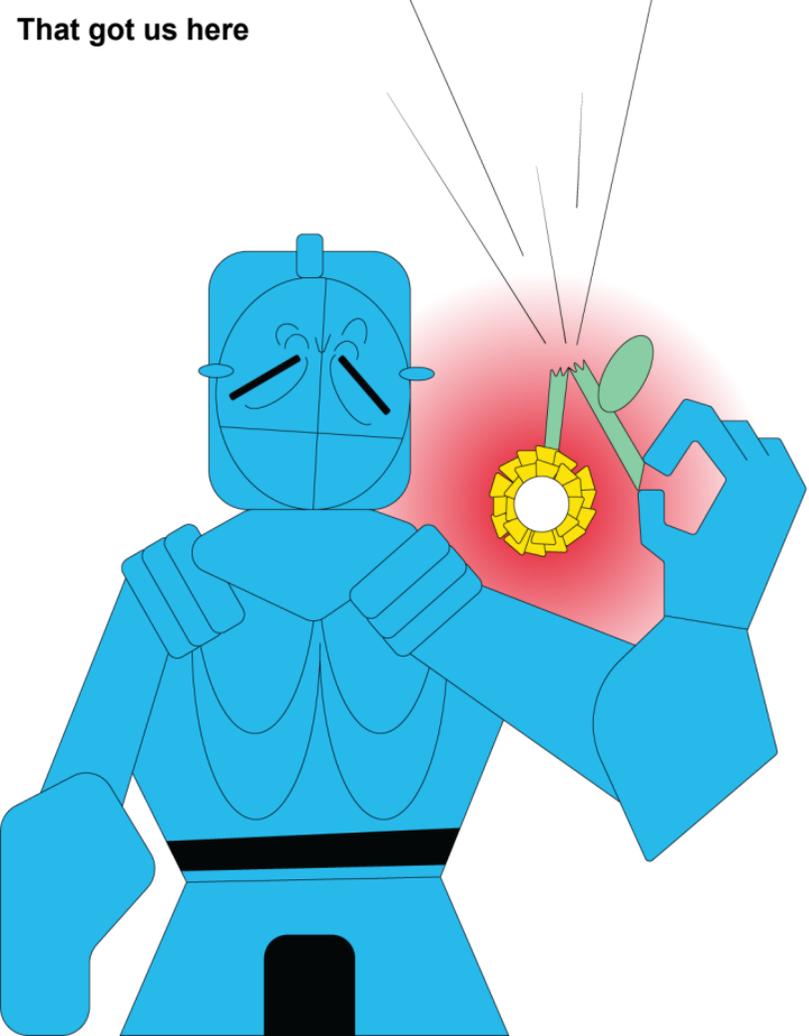
## Which created an industry

The result of the commodification of music was that people became insecure about where money would flow. Through a lineage of creative abuse, new laws, incentives, actors and stakeholders emerged little by little.

These established roles could now cover every corner of the music world to harvest every penny of musical products, experiences, whistles and hums. Behold the music industry.



That got us here



Fast forward to current music, streaming platforms and musical mediums are completely dependent on musicians to create a constant flow of new sounds that can be provided to listeners.

There are no fundamental rules to what music you should make, but there are current forces that do much of the same job as fundamental rules. The music industry is one of those forces, with its gigantic number of actors who are involved in the deployment and spread of music.

The current music industry depends on the musicians ability to provide a one-way delivery to the needs of listeners. Entering the music industry is like wearing heavy disguising armor, it gives you a facade that protects you, but keeps you further away from feeling the environment that you are interacting with.

Here, as in poor musicians



Musical Currents

The covid19 pandemic highlighted that some of the inner workings of the music industry and its most used mediums were flawed.

Digitalization of the industry made everyone rely more and more on streaming platforms, and a line of issues were suddenly in the spotlight as musicians were ripped off stage.

Through emerging poverty among musicians it became clear that major streaming platforms could only provide a decent salary to around 1% of the most popular musicians. The rest ended up feeding their life's work into the platform industry machinery for marginal returns.

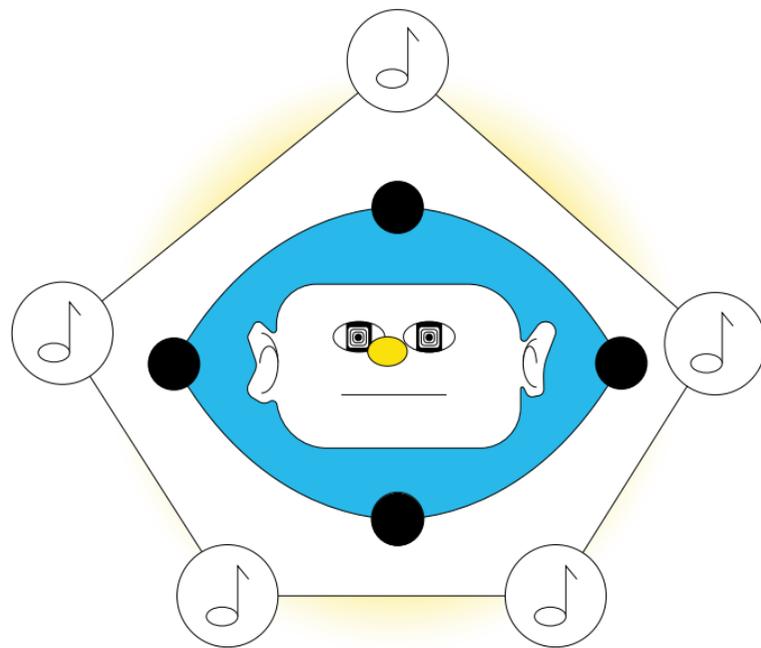
hi@overhear.us

## Here, affecting how we listen

The argument encompassing streaming platforms is to primarily serve the user (listeners). But is it all user-centric?

No. Music is no longer in the power of the musician, and neither is it in the power of the listener. It is nor in the power of the explorer. The issue of popular accessibility to music boils down to centralisation. Big Platforms has the power to curate whatever music is relevant, why and when.

On-demand music gives you the opportunity to listen to music whenever and wherever. This was also the case when .mp3 was popular, although as soon as music moved into the cloud, we're gradually losing control over our own mediums and are giving away our own ability to explore new music.



And it's easy to sum it up

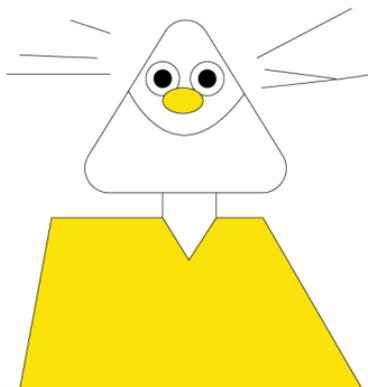
## Menu

Beats to  
work to

Cookin'  
food

Run fast

Time to  
Drink  
coffee

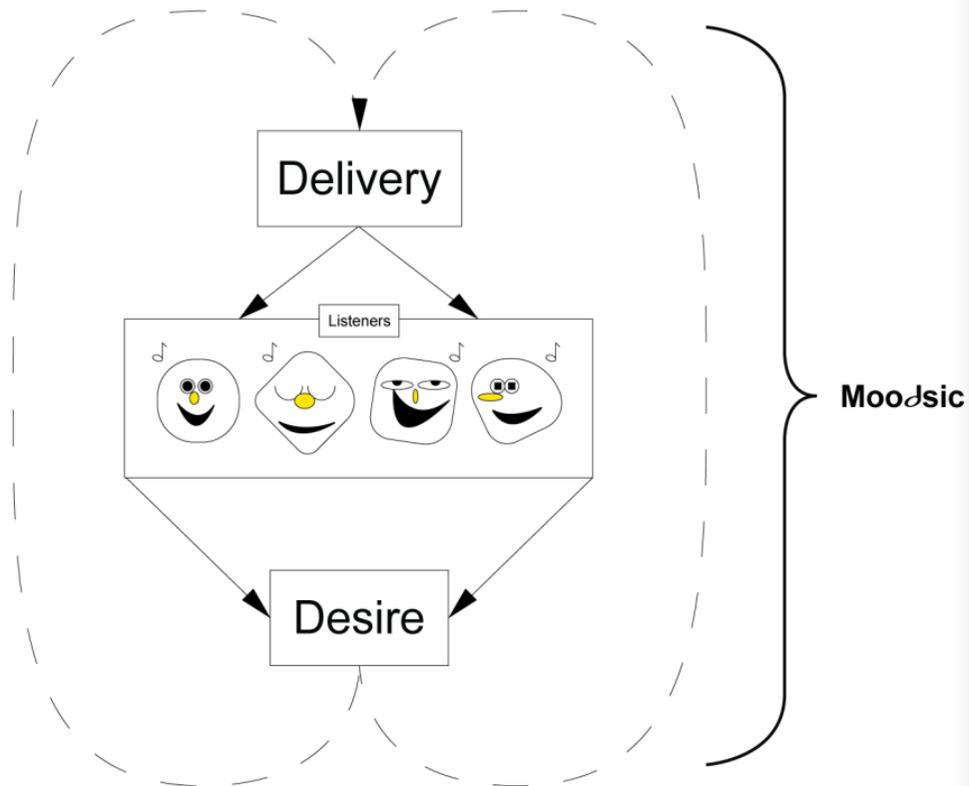


Music supply

Music is increasingly becoming a complete service, like ordering a massage, a motivational coach, a mind wandering journey, a playlist for running.

We take the massive supply of music for granted, as it is always and ever accessible in any given situation.

## And call it Mood<sub>s</sub>ic

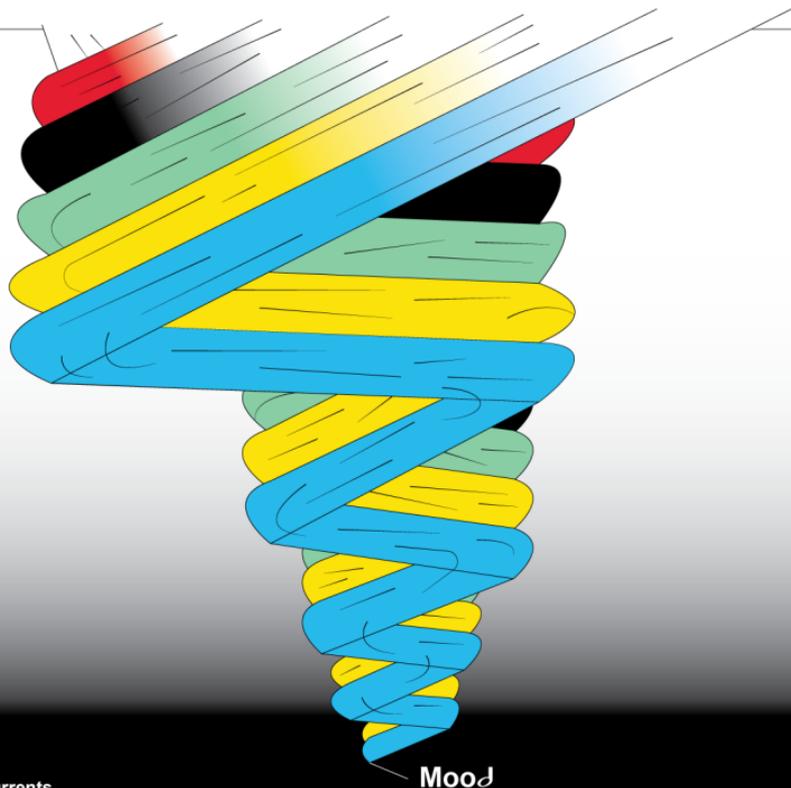
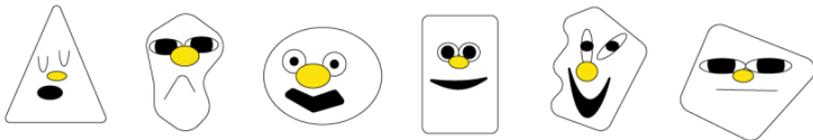


We see this centralised acceleration as moving towards utilitarian music, that is currently in the gray zone between caring for your musical preferences while pushing for a type of modernized muzak, we call this Mood<sub>s</sub>ic.

This generalisation is gradually becoming legible, because of the enormous amount of people listening to music via streaming platforms, such as Spotify, Apple music or Youtube.

Current popular mediums are actively building their services around fulfilling your musical wishes and desires, which further defines what your musical wishes and desires are in the first place.

## -A thriving phenomena



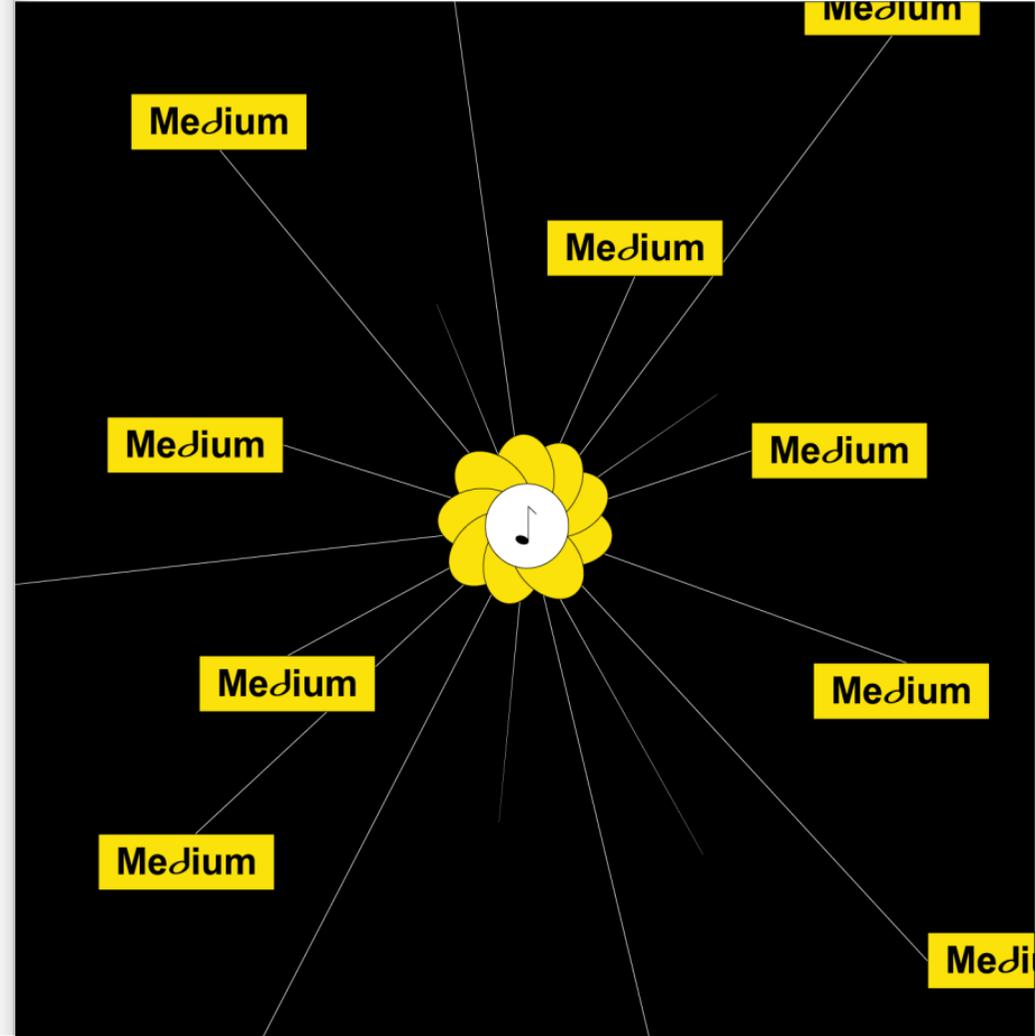
This not only allows the people who own streaming platforms to understand your personal taste in music, it also makes it possible to draw lines between taste demographics, which are becoming less bound to physical space, less bound to music genres, moving away from musical context and history, and driving full speed into the goal of fulfilling every mood of any given situation.

## That has led to changes

As for now, the consequence of poor musicians has resulted in some progressivity. A number of musicians and developers are teaming up and moving their sound portfolios over to new mediums. These mediums are promoting alternative payment models, new ownership structures and guidelines that give direct power to the musicians.

A sprawl of new musical mediums simultaneously opened the door for other types of listening experiences and musician-listener interactions.

Just like you would go to different physical venues for different musical experiences, we were and are seeing a digital equivalent emerging.

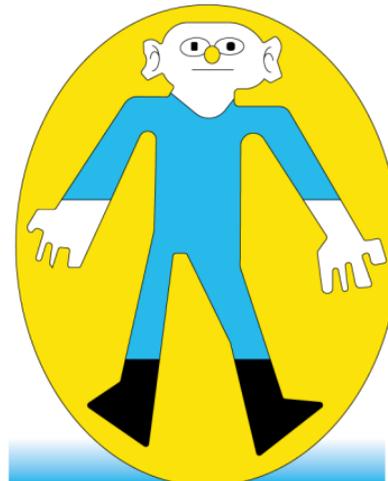


## But changes for who?

The musicians belly is becoming larger and larger, they are trying to move away from providing tunes in order to grease the Moodsic machinery, and towards advocating for and connecting with the people listening to their music. Commercial practice is moving towards the era of fat musicians.

Fat Musicians manage themselves through utilizing the same basic possibilities that lie in the digital world as major streaming platforms, allowing for new digital mediums, as well as physical mediums through digital connection.

**Musician**



**Makes  
Music**

**Fat  
Musician**



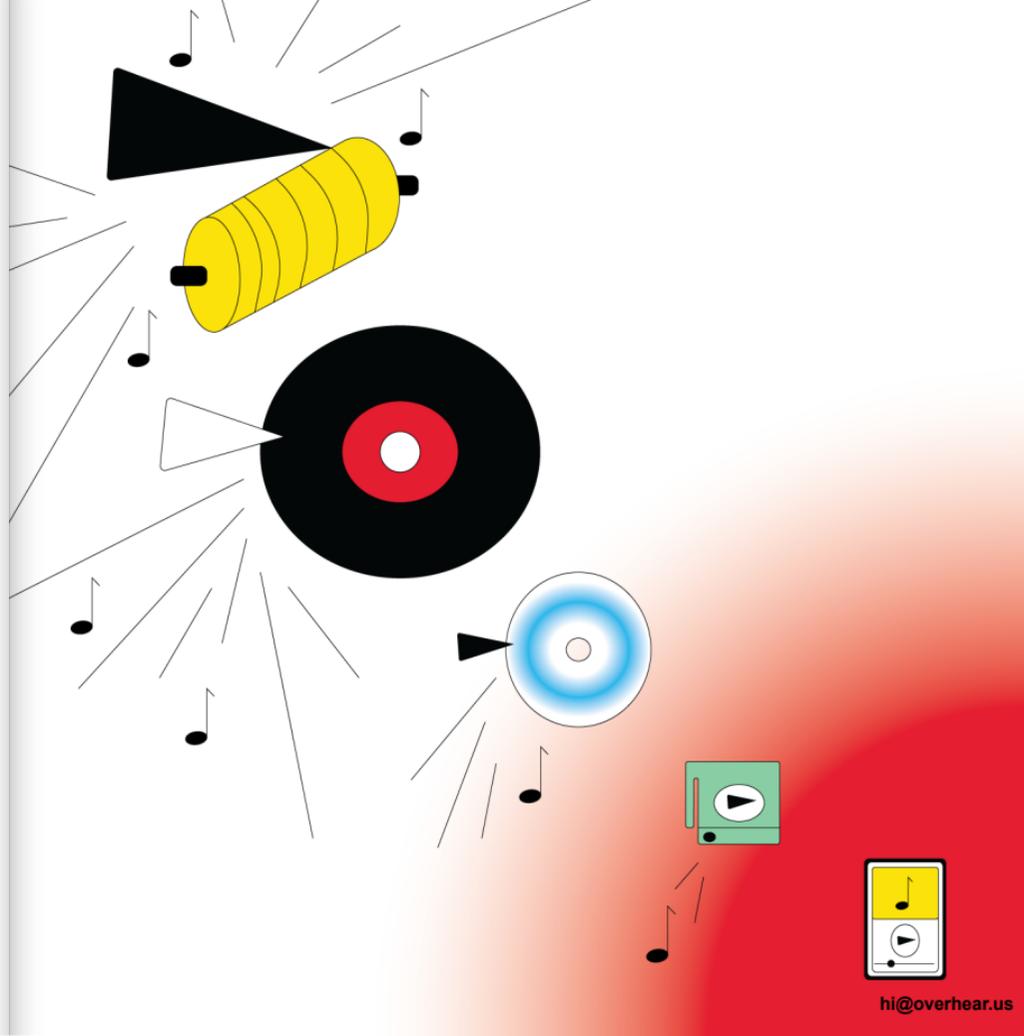
**Makes  
Music  
and  
manages  
their  
medium**

## And changes regarding what?

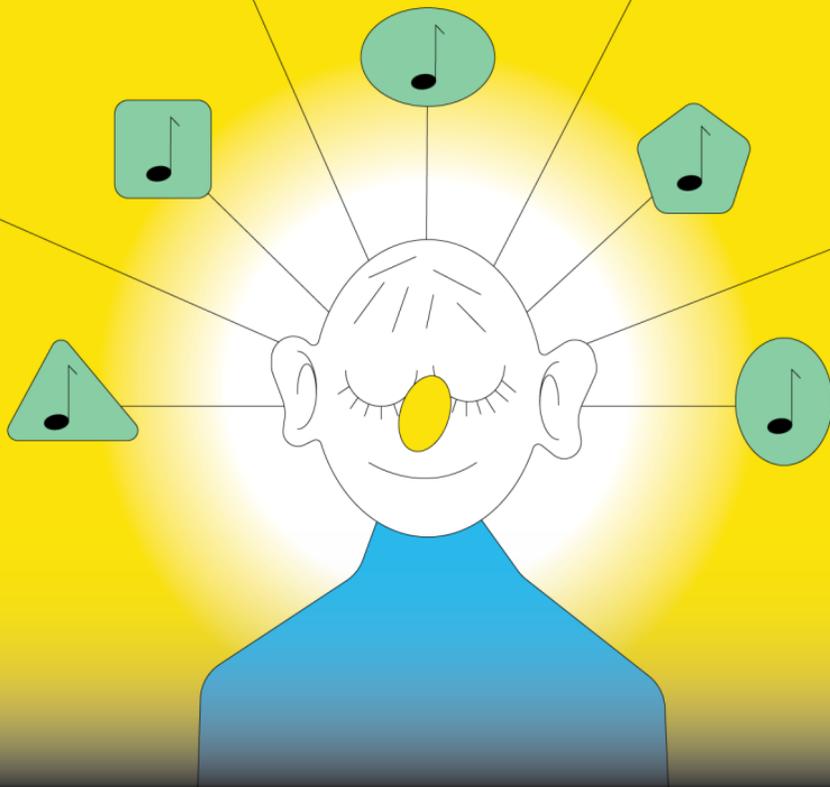
The music industry has always been constrained by metrics and numbers. Creating business around tools and portals for music creation is as much of an industry in itself as distribution of songs.

The first commercial recordings were broadly available through wax cylinders, then going over to vinyl records which are more similar to the formats we can recognize today. Musicians and their songs had to conform to the limitations of the format, durations and physicality. Then, over to tech gear and digital formats.

Now we're using musical mediums, which embody more interaction and connection than mere formats. The potential of mediums are evident, but there is currently no larger consensus that rethinking mediums hold the key to alternative listening experiences.



While individual changes can be beneficial



What issues of Musical Currents affect you as a listener?

The exact benefits of new listening experiences through new mediums would be individual and up for experimentation. Though, we argue that a healthy relationship with music follows a healthy mind, knowing to limit both consumption and exposure to avoid vulgarizing and wearing out the special moments.

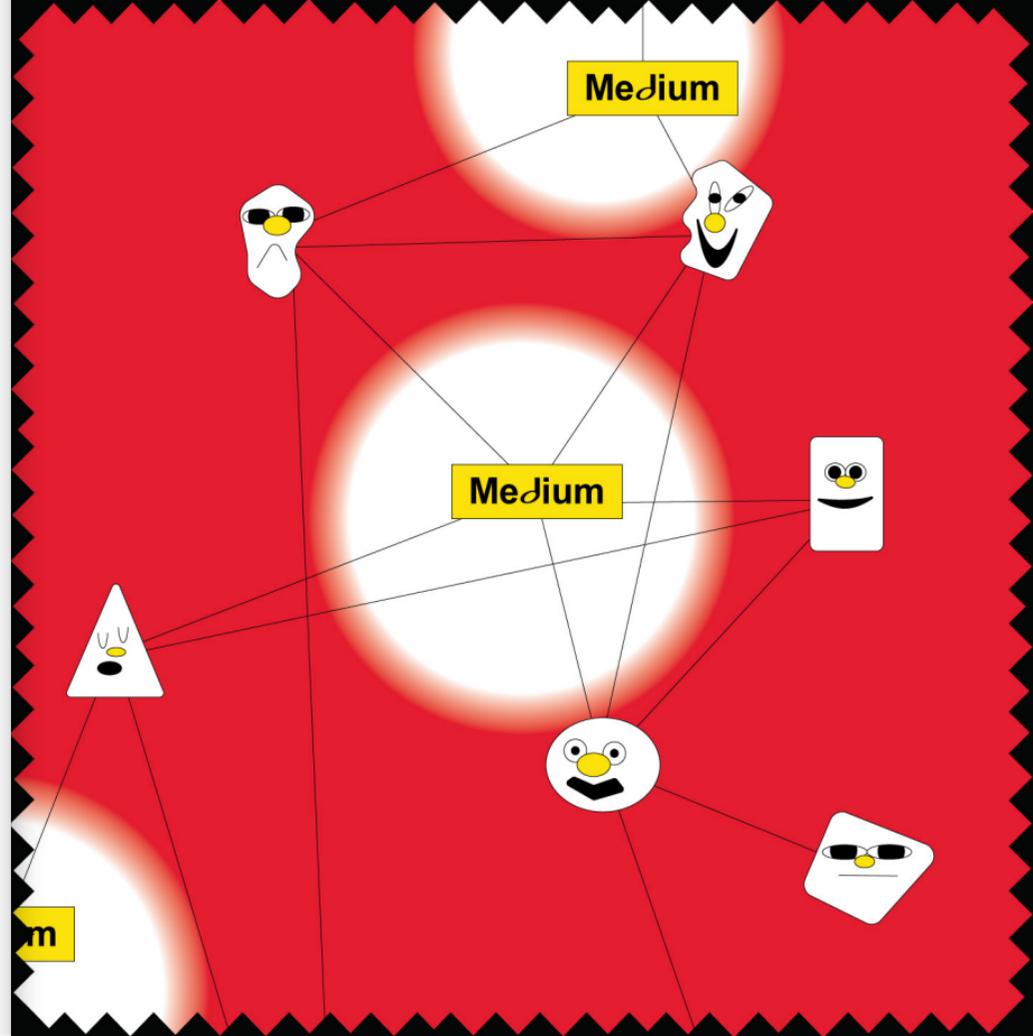
This contradicts the model laid forward by the algorithmical approach, trying to keep you engaged with the platforms offering at all times.

## Perhaps the solution lies in the collective effort

Allow us to conclude; is there any way that we can see a hole in this Moodsic tube? Are there viable alternatives that not only give musicians better terms for creating, but also gives listeners sonic alternatives to algorithmically infused dopamine kicks?

Yes. We believe that a post-streaming era follows the conscious creation and exploration of new musical mediums taking everyone into account. Not just the musician, not just the user, not just the moneymen.

New musical mediums are the way to go, although they need to be shaped holistically and interconnected to cater for strong ecosystems, inspiring creative practices and attractive experiences.



## And of making musical mediums for all people

We've done the job once ourselves by looking at how the public sector can contribute with their own non-commercial musical mediums.

You can now flip to Issue 2: New Cultural Governance for Music.



1 - Gottlieb, J. (2019) Music everywhere. Available at: <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/11/new-harvard-study-establishes-music-is-universal>

(accessed: 5 June 2021).

2 -Bell, S. N. (2015) Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-De-Ay:

The dodgy business of popular music. England: Unbound.

3 - Pelly, L. (2017) The Problem With Muzak. Available at: <https://thebaffler.com/salvos/the-problem-with-muzak-pelly> (accessed: 5 June 2021).

4 - Anonymous. (2021) Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the music industry, *Wikipedia*. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impact\\_of\\_the\\_COVID-19\\_pandemic\\_on\\_the\\_music\\_industry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impact_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_on_the_music_industry) (Accessed: 5 June 2021).

5 - Union of Musicians and Allied Workers (2021) *Justice at Spotify*. Available at: <https://www.unionofmusicians.org/justice-at-spotify> (accessed: 5 June 2021).

6 - Porter, J. (2021) Spotify premium subscriber count increases 21 percent to 158 million. *The Verge*, 28 April 2021. Available at: <https://www.theverge.com/2021/4/28/22405953/spotify-earnings-q1-2021-subscribers-average-revenue-per-user> (Accessed: 5 June 2021).

7 - Dryhurst, M. and Herndon, H. (2021) Artist Led Pricing, Scene ownership and defecting from Spotify with Audius. [Podcast]. 16 February 2021. Available at: <https://interdependence.fm/episodes/artist-led-pricing-scene-ownership-and-defecting-from-spotify-with-audius> (Accessed: 5 June 2021).

8 - Audius inc. (2021) *Audius*. Available at: <https://audius.org/> (Accessed: 5 June 2021). - Resonate. (2021) *Resonate*. Available at: <https://resonate.is/> (Accessed: 5 June 2021). - Ampled. (2021) *Ampled*. Available at: <https://www.ampled.com/> (Accessed: 5 June 2021).

9 - Krukowski, D. (2018) How to Be a Responsible Music Fan in the Age of Streaming. *Pitchfork*, 30 January 2018. Available at: <https://pitchfork.com/features/oped/how-to-be-a-responsible-music-fan-in-the-age-of-streaming/?fbclid=IwAR142cxKF08d6rorjtUHWLO6WVgMOcziCbR2RTiys5u->