

# Remixing Music in the City and Music online: How Listening to Music Changes because of Piracy

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## 1 ABSTRACT

Music has often changed, from a social point of view, and also the relationship between music and the city. This paper attempts to describe how music changes under the impact of Internet. Are concerned the milieu of musicians and the audiences. The economic model of music has not burst into pieces, but it has deeply changed. There is a trend to pure consumerism thanks to Internet (probably the sales of downloaded music will become more and more important). Also, independent artists can use Internet and have a livelihood (fat tail phenomenon). Therefore the diversity of music can be preserved. Concerts (music in the city) allow escaping from the losses of money because of piracy. There are several experiences for listeners, which are possible, some of them involving going to concerts and festivals.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

Mutations of music, and also of the relationship between music and the city, have been described by some sociologists. For instance, Adorno, in his famous book on the sociology of music, has shown how the dominance of recorded music occurred. Till the 19th century, music lovers were people performing it. They were aristocrats or people having a job allowing leisure (like doctors). Recorded music allowed anybody listening to the best musical performance. But listeners were no more people performing music. According to Adorno, the companies editing recorded music have a control over the public's taste. Hence a decline of good taste. Music becomes a commercial good. Composers prefer to compose music for movies to have a livelihood. Honegger wrote: "the musician has to be a craftsman". Also, from Stravinsky: "any reaction is good" (meaning that any demand from the public is a good thing). At the opposite, Schoenberg was always an inflexible composer.

The American sociologist Howard Becker tells another story. He describes the ordinary jazzmen (not the "stars" of the milieu) in the USA. The condition and the outcome of their activity is the repertoire. In the first half of the 20th century, it was called the "Great American Songbook". The knowledge of the repertoire allowed jazzmen who were not accustomed to perform music together, succeeding in doing it. The repertoire was a living one (songs becoming out fashioned, other appearing). This music was performed in public places (ballrooms, cafes, restaurants etc.) or in private parties (ceremonies, marriages ...). All that changes in the fifties when FM radios appeared (allowing diffusion of precisely defined genres like rock, soul, country music, dance music like sambas, bossa novas etc.), and also TV (changing the way in which people spend their leisure time, they are more and more in their houses and less in public places). Schools for jazzmen appear. Before, they learned pieces of music listening to radios or buying scores (called "lead sheets" or often "fake books" because they were pirated). Now they listen to web radios or streaming sites, can download scores on Internet. It is cheap to record a Compact Disc (used to show the talent of a musician or a band to a possible employer). One can use a home recording studio. Even, some musicians are teleworkers. Also, more and more electrical material is used by instrumentalists. There is a Computer Aided Music. Internet has become a tool for musicians.

In this paper, we shall attempt to describe the current impact of Internet on music. In particular, we examine the consequences of piracy. But first, we have to quickly describe what piracy is and what the response of the Majors of music is:

A few words on piracy. There are "amateur pirates" and "professional pirates". The last are an organized community. They have their own definition of performance or feat, their own hierarchy of talents. They meet in some places (they organize congresses). The framing to examine this milieu should comprise the warders. There is the role of social interaction. For instance, the beginners are initiated by those who know the tricks to escape from the warders. Or there is a competition to accomplish the most spectacular feat. The contempt they trigger can influence their behavior (Becker, 1995). This idea on deviance comes from Howard Becker. It is the main idea in the theory called "labeling theory". According to this theory the means used on Internet called "shaming" should not be efficient (note that we speak of the "professional pirates", not of the "amateur pirates"). There are "moral careers": one can stop, go on or ... pass to the other side, the warders

‘one, the ability in computing serving the security of firms and administrations. Let us recall that for some, piracy is their livelihood. One can be sure that this kind of piracy will last.

The response of the Majors of music. The economic consequence of piracy is that demand decreases, and also the profits of the Majors (even if other activities than recorded music, like music diffused on radio or TV chains, in nightclubs, or concerts, are not vulnerable to piracy). They have to make economies. They sign fewer contracts with artists. Before, they could sign contracts with beginning artists, being in the role of an insurer. They no more do it, hence some danger for the future of music (Lefebvre, 2008). But now the selection of notorious musicians, among the beginners, occurs on the social networks like Facebook. Once a musician is notorious (thanks to the free diffusion of the music he or she performed on Facebook) he (she) becomes an independent artist or accepts a contract with a Major. The Majors struggle against piracy, using all means they can use (pedagogy, legal punishments ...). But if Internet is really a global phenomenon, reflecting the human nature, amateur piracy will be uneasy to eradicate: human nature is made up of Desire (desire of “free lunch”) and Reason (acceptance of the economic exchange). Amateur piracy is the consequence of the “appalling popularity of music”, to use the words of Constant Lambert.<sup>1</sup> Concerning professional pirates, they will continue. Paradoxically, they do not “steal” the musicians, since they download files illegally only because it is a feat: if they were not pirates, they should not buy the files they download. But they “steal” the telecommunications operators, saturating their networks. Of course, we do not speak of these professional pirates who allow amateur pirates to illegally download pieces of music, thanks to sites they control (they may make money or not). What has been the response of the Majors of music? Their ability to cope with crises is legendary (Lefebvre, 2008). Their response has been to merge and to have branches organizing concerts (since concerts escape from the consequences of piracy).

We shall describe the effects of Internet on the musicians, on the audiences and on the diversity and the evolution of music. Note that the last topic has not only economic and technological aspects, but also social and aesthetic.

### 3 THE IMPACT OF INTERNET ON THE MILIEU OF MUSICIANS

We can distinguish three categories:

(1) The “stars”. Once one of them is notorious thanks to the social networks, he (she) signs a contract with a Major. This company manages his (her) career, including concerts. It is the realm of culture industry. The place is large cities.

(2) Independent artists. They use the social networks and blogs to reach recognition. To have a livelihood, they bank on concerts (and sometimes on teaching). Also, they can use micro labels (to sell Compact Discs) or Net labels (small labels on Internet, allowing downloading music for free or at a very low tariff). They escape from the influence of Majors, which have strong requirements concerning the musicians who have contracted with them. They have a direct control over the link between themselves and the public. Thus Internet allows the “fat tail” phenomenon. Diversity of music is preserved.

(3) Ordinary musicians. They record music rarely, indeed just when they are at the top of their career: at this time they record several Compact Discs and make tours far away from their region. They can sell a few Compact Discs to listeners when they perform music in a concert. In general, they perform music in public places (ballrooms, cafés). They have a livelihood but are not affluent people. They prefer to perform the music they like, but it is not always possible. According to the French sociologist Perrenoud, who has studied this milieu, there are three possible situations. When they give concerts the music they perform is of a good quality. In the case of “entertainment” (balls, feasts ...) the audience is a partner and there is an interesting stake for them, since they have to understand the desires of the customers and to satisfy them. In a third situation, it is Eric Satie’s “musique d’ameublement” (music like furniture) or background music. For instance the musicians play jingles during a ceremony, or they perform music in a casino. The public is indifferent, or they do not listen to music at all. If it is boring for musicians, it is ... lucrative. According to Perrenoud, these musicians participate in “local networks” while the “stars” participate in “cosmopolitan networks”. The American sociologist Robert Merton has characterized the “local networks” as relying on personal relations, and the “cosmopolitan networks” as relying on competency. The “cosmopolitan networks” are present in the large cities, where culture industry is located.

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<sup>1</sup> Already in the thirties, there were attempts to diffuse music thanks to loudspeakers in the streets of some British cities.

#### 4 THE IMPACT OF INTERNET ON AUDIENCES

There are three categories. They can be described in terms of listener's experience:

(1) Pure consumerism. These listeners follow fashion. They often listen to a small number of "blockbusters", but changing. If they are young, they listen to music freely (often they access social networks, by means of mobile phones). The sales of downloaded music are increasing, as it is shown by the success of I-Tunes. Internet is favorable to this kind of consumption: practical, allowing teasing the desires of listeners, entertaining. Of course, "amateur piracy" is a limit, but let us recall that at the time of discs and CDs, there was some piracy, also. Legal downloaded music is more and more in accordance with the needs of this audience. These listeners can go to concerts given by the stars they like. It is the kind of concert in a large hall or outdoors, gathering thousands of people. It is attractive not only because of music but also because of the spectacle and atmosphere. But even if this case, there is a substitute: the music video. Music videos are a great success. They can be bought on Internet. Also, one can view them on some TV chains (MTV is the most famous).

(2) Tribal listeners. It is another experience of listening to music, that of listeners fond of a particular genre. They use social networks, Internet and go to concerts. They are a tribe, a "group of peers", to use the words of the American sociologist David Riesman. Often, these musical tastes are linked to other tastes, or behaviors (clothes, politics ...). This passion can lead to attempt to perform music. Often, a beginning musician passes from a "group of peers" to a professional way of life (Perrenoud, 2010).

(3) "Interested amateurs". These listeners build up their own experience in an autonomous way. They want to understand some aspects of the music they listen to, its evolution etc. They make experiments. They use all the means to listen to music: Internet, independent medias (like France Musique and TSF Jazz, which are radio chains in France) , concerts ... From an economic point of view, it is interesting for those whose livelihood is music: these various means of diffusing music can be combined to obtain "synergies", that is to say to boost sales. For instance, a radio chain informs that on Internet one can obtain rebates to go to some concert, make advertising for clubs organizing concerts, broadcast discussions triggering the purchase of CDs by listeners etc. Here, there are two opposite points of view. According to Adorno, these listeners are in "secondary roles". According to the musicians described by Howard Becker all those who are not musicians are "squares" (meaning philistines). But some think that there is room for a middlebrow art. We deal with this topic, now.

#### 5 THE IMPACT OF INTERNET ON DIVERSITY OF MUSIC AND TASTES

According to Constant Lambert, there is a highbrow art, a middlebrow art and a lowbrow art. Lowbrow art is popular art (pop music, songs which are "blockbusters" etc.). Middlebrow art is more sophisticated. One often quotes Offenbach, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington and Kurt Weil. Note that the line between middlebrow and highbrow music is not so clear: Sibelius composed for circus, Schoenberg, Webern, Ravel (and others) composed waltzes à la Johan Strauss ... But what is highbrow art?

Let us start from the Impressionist Revolution in painting and music. Around 1900, occurred the "painter's rebellion" according to André Malraux in his book "Le musée imaginaire". The topic disappears. Instead, the way in which the painter looks at the world, is interesting. Perspective and horizon disappear. Color is dominant, not drawing. According to the French sociologist Francastel, Cézanne "paints the color" (not adding color to drawing), creating an impression of depth with color. On the painting, large colored areas suggest mutual links between things or human beings. The end of successive planes removes sacredness (our environment is not always submitted to hierarchies). But emotion does not disappear. There is color and atmosphere. Also, it is a fleeting instant, as when the modern citizen understands what he (she) has around him (her) thanks to his (her) saturated senses (Mac Luhan thought that we understand our environment thanks to synthetic images). The evolution is from the meticulously built up spectacle, to poetic atmosphere. From structured spectacle, with particular areas on the painting, to a single space pervaded by an atmosphere (at this time, the French sociologist Tarde wrote that diffusion is space is a universal notion). In music, traditional form (symphonies of the 18th century, Litzian symphonic poem) is dynamited by Debussy, Stravinsky and Schoenberg, before the First World War (Lambert, 1948). Curiously, the origin is ... Oriental music, with Glinka. Form is replaced by frantic rhythm and successive surprises. Through the Russian musicians, Chabrier, this influence reaches the music of Debussy, Stravinsky and Schoenberg. What was

efficient to remove traditional form was not so much nationalistic music but exoticism (Glinka composed music in the Spanish style). Finally a list of innovations was accepted (pentatonic scale, all tone scale, atonal and serial music, rhythmic innovations coming from ethnic sources etc.). After the First World War an era of pastiche begins. The major influence is “barbaric rhythm” suggested by jazz, but no highbrow composer will seize the opportunity. An era of experiments (like concrete music initiated by Georges Antheil or electronic music) begins. Constant Lambert deplores the lack of middlebrow composers.

Let us sum up the characteristics of lowbrow and highbrow art:

<i>Lowbrow art</i>	<i>Highbrow art</i>
Specialized (idiomatic) <sup>2</sup>	Universal (cross border)
Unambiguous	Ambiguous
Redundant	Full of surprises
Oriented towards the person's universe	Abstraction, intellectualism <sup>3</sup>
Not technically sophisticated <sup>4</sup>	Technically sophisticated

Now we can describe towards what fate the “interested amateur” is driven by his (her) experience. Either we describe this experience in the words of marketing. Brands allow the customer's experience. They choose a theme, and then freely propose videos on social networks or Internet (on particular regions, on trips, on “stars”, on sports ...) or give advices, display cooking recipes etc. The idea is to fashion the customer's experience to trigger the purchases of the brand's products. In this case, the “interested amateur” is in a “secondary role”. But he (she) can also reflect on music in an autonomous way. There are many questions deserving reflection:

- What is the better music, the exotic or the nationalistic?<sup>5</sup>
- Do we need middlebrow composers and to do what?
- What is the role of technology?<sup>6</sup>
- What is the evolution of music?
- Etc.

The French specialist of Medias (and musician who invented “concrete music”) Pierre Schaeffer wrote: “on music anybody tells anything”. Therefore there is room for the “interested amateur” reflecting on music in his (her) own way.

Howard Becker has described these groups giving support to an artist (or several artists) attempting to change conventions and aesthetic choices (Becker, 1988). An “interested amateur” should belong to a group of this kind.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The city is no more the place where notorious musicians are selected (it is done on the social networks<sup>7</sup>), or where the tastes are fashioned, but it remains a place where music is diffused, listened to. After all, the city and music have something in common. For instance, the both allow “time travelling” (to use the Constant Lambert's words). The atmosphere of ancient quarters in cities gives the impression to make a trip in time. It is the same when one listens to ancient music, perhaps played with ancient instruments. It is emotion thanks

<sup>2</sup> Idiomatic is the word used by Perrenoud to characterize the genre that tribal listeners listen to.

<sup>3</sup> According to Mac Luhan, modern art wants to understand the aesthetic effects. It is more difficult to understand the effects (backward, from the effect to the cause) than to observe the effect (forward, from the cause to the effect).

<sup>4</sup> Some innovations coming from highbrow music can pervade lowbrow music after some time: thus the pentatonic scale is used by the rock music. But even the rhythms of lowbrow music are less complex than those of highbrow music (as the rhythms coming from the Hindu tradition used by Olivier Messiaen).

<sup>5</sup> Nationalistic music sticks to folklore melodies and rhythms, and even can be played with authentic, traditional instruments. Representatives are Albeniz and Bartok. Now it is called “world music”.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of “electronic music” there are no more instruments. Music is diffused through loudspeakers. However, it is played. Tunings are made by the composer, who is also the Disc Jockey. Software is used.

<sup>7</sup> It is different for classical music. The career involves studying in a conservatory, participation in international competitions, then recordings and concerts.

to a travel in time. One can taste the both: visiting the French Quarter in New Orleans and listening to jazz dating from 1900. Cities propose many ancient places where one can listen to music: churches, cloisters, palaces, old plazas etc. There are also industrial buildings which have been revamped, opera houses, classical concert halls, modern auditoriums ... Only the modern auditoriums are really adapted to the sound engineers 'tricks to obtain a sound of good quality, and modern orchestras. In other places there is a dilemma: one can use the sound engineers 'tricks to obtain a sound of good quality, but the original atmosphere is lost, or one keeps the ancient atmosphere but the sound is not perfect. In any case, recorded music is of good quality, no matter the place where it is recorded.

The presence of music in cities is often subsidized: it is the case for opera houses, conservatories, sometimes some bands. The ordinary musicians are paid indemnities if they do not earn enough fees in one year (in France and other European countries). In large cities, the stake is the image of a city. In small cities, support is given to festivals. Essential are events (like the presence of famous artists) and the peculiar atmosphere which is liked by those going to festivals. Settings have to be pleasant thanks to historical, architectural or natural features. The success of festivals depends on their reputation.

There is not a revival of concerts, but the dominance of recorded music is not absolute. One of the reasons is that concerts escape from the consequences of piracy. It is better from the point of view of the musicians 'livelihood.

There are several experiences of listening to music, some of them involving going to concerts.

Ten or fifteen years ago, Internet appeared as very much adequate to distribution of music. It was flexible enough to distribute music in these two situations: either the public is large and unknown, either it is small and known (Becker, 1988). But one can apply this idea from the French social thinker Proudhon to Internet: any important social progress has its other side, is also a cause of problems. Internet generated piracy. The economic model of music has not exploded. But musicians are more interested in concerts, since their revenues from recorded music are often threatened by piracy.

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Still, listening to upbeat, fun music has a positive effect on one's creativity and teamwork abilities – the so-called soft skills. Researchers from the Netherlands have conducted creativity tests in several groups of people. Researchers have suggested that the changes in the speed and amounts of alcohol consumed at bars are prompted by the volume of music, as louder sounds get them more excited and willing to eat and drink. Moreover, overbearing sound prevents patrons from being able to converse with each other. Music can also make your beer taste better! Just like people, cats relaxed while listening to classical music and became tense while listening to AC/DC's hit song "Thunderstruck". Back to top. Natalia Blinnikova.