

Symposium on the platformization of music production

University of Oslo, May 2–3, 2025

Abstracts

Keynote

“Any Sound an AI Can Imagine: Making music in the age of platform culture”

Paul Théberge

Over the past 25 years, music distribution has been a critical nodal point where a variety of technical, economic, social and cultural forces have reconfigured what we once knew as the “music industries” – a matrix of artists, corporate infrastructures, cultural mediators, and consumers – and increasingly focused their activities on media platforms as the primary means and mode of musical culture. This phenomenon has been the subject of much popular commentary and academic research, especially regarding the role played by recommendation algorithms in streaming services, but far less attention has been placed on the role of media platforms in music production. In this talk, I want to expand on some of the frameworks of analysis employed in my earlier work (on digital musical instruments, recording studios, and fandom) to explore the ways that music production and the Internet have become a fully integrated network of technologies and musical/social relationships – a set of relationships that increasingly mirrors contemporary networks of consumption – and to speculate about the concomitant uses of databases and AI in music production.

Paper presentations (listed chronologically)

“What do musicians think of digital platforms? A focus group study of musicians and platformization in England”

Bondy Kaye & David Hesmondhalgh

This presentation discusses how musicians with backgrounds in different genres evaluate the effects of a range of digital platforms on musicians and on music culture. Our presentation is informed by recent research on working conditions for musicians in the platform era and public debates about them. Initial excitement about the possibility that digitalisation might bring about ‘democratisation’, by bypassing traditional industry mediation, has given way to a pronounced disquiet about the problems faced by musicians in making a living from music in a new system dominated by streaming and social media platforms (Everts et al., 2022; Coulson, 2012; Haynes and Marshall, 2018). Key areas of concern relate to systems of recommendation that are so important on MSPs and social media platforms (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2022), and the notion that platforms are somehow distorting musical creativity by encouraging strategies to ‘optimise’ musical outputs to be more discoverable (Morris et al., 2021). Musician perspectives on the digital and social media platforms that are at the centre of the new system have undoubtedly featured in recent research (e.g. Mühlbach and Arora 2021; Freeman, Gibbs and Nansen 2023), though not via interactive discussion amongst musicians. Accordingly, our study employs focus groups to answer the following research questions. How do musicians understand the platform-based musical system that has emerged in recent years, and these and other concerns associated with it? How do they understand the problems *and* benefits of MSPs and the more general system of which they are part? What range of perspectives is apparent among musicians?

We rely on data from six qualitative focus groups conducted in 2023 with musicians based in England. Focus groups prioritise interaction between participants and offer a more critical

and reflexive framework on the nature of attitudes (Waterton & Wynne, 1999). Focus groups also allow researchers to access valuable ‘musician talk,’ or how musicians talk to each other coming from a position of mutual understanding, respect, and curiosity (Wilson and MacDonald, 2005). We conducted one pilot focus group in March 2023 with seven participants in-person to test the facilitation guide. Following the pilot, we conducted five virtual focus groups via Zoom from April until July 2023. In total we recruited 34 participants across six focus groups. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 65. The majority of participants (22) identified as cis male and just over half identified as white British (19). We grouped participants together roughly by self-identified genre. The final genre groupings included: jazz (7), rock (8), pop (5), hip-hop (5), electronic/dance (EDM) (5), and classical (4).

We report antipathy expressed by musicians about various features of platforms and to some of their impacts. But we also report musicians’ responses to the platformization of music that may in many respects be more ambivalent and nuanced than some of the existing research suggests. Alongside critiques familiar from recent public debate and recent academic research, we detect a number of more ambivalent and even positive perspectives on the platformization of music. We analyse the divided responses of our focus group participants under three main headings: attitudes towards music streaming platforms; attitudes towards social media and short video platforms, in particular their use as promotional and branding mechanisms; and attitudes towards the abundance of data available to musicians from all these different kinds of digital platforms. In our concluding comments, we question the idea that musicians’ ambivalent and sometimes positive appraisals represent a form of distorted thinking about the effects of platformization. This presentation is highly relevant to a symposium on the platformization of music production offering timely, detailed and interactive perspectives from musicians’ about platforms and platformization.

“The platformization of songwriting: An exploration of the Interplay between technological constraints, creative agency, and cultural production”

Carsten Wernicke & Jan Herbst

Songwriting has long been influenced by the technical conditions of its production and distribution, from the Tin Pan Alley era to the dominance of radio and MTV (see Tschmuck 2012). A century later, popular music is still conceived and produced by teams of specialized experts. While roles within songwriting—such as topliner or producer—are well-defined, they remain flexible between songwriting sessions. This phenomenon fosters specific types of collaborative creativity (Bennett 2014). However, recent years have seen these dynamics increasingly shaped by the platformization of music songwriting and production that are currently not fully understood.

Generally, platformization involves standardized key aspects of songwriting, including total duration, hook placement (e.g., Spotify’s “30-second rule”), and loudness standards (LUFS). These requirements have significant implications for the creation of platform-compatible music products. However, we would argue that even the setting in which songwriting occurs is becoming platformized. This is especially true for songwriting camps as online or offline networking structures, which reflect information-technological logics within songwriting practices. Therefore, this presentation explores how these camps navigate these constraints within their creative ecosystems.

Based on data from a bi-national research project involving interviews with industry professionals, artists and other creative contributors and stakeholders, as well as participant observations, this study employs constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz 2017) to analyze the negotiation of “functional rules” and “media formats” in contemporary songwriting, adding to existing analyses of creative practices in songwriting. Our contribution also considers broader ecosystemic factors, including rights management and the influence

of artificial intelligence on creative practice (Clancy 2023), as well as the feedback loop between platformized music businesses and creative processes (Geurts & Cepa 2023). By examining how songwriting standards are negotiated under platformed conditions, this presentation illuminates the evolving interplay between technological constraints, creative agency, and cultural production in the digital music economy.

“The emergence and potential decline of cloud-based sample platforms”

Vemund Hegstad Alm & Ragnhild Brøvig

This presentation explores the emergence of cloud-based sample platforms like Splice and Loopcloud and consider their potential decline in the age of AI-generated music.

Sabrina Carpenter’s hit single “Espresso,” released on April 11th, 2024, put the spotlight on the ubiquitous use of online sample platforms in popular music. The songs’ main instrumental elements-guitars and drums-stem from two loops of producer Oliver’s popular pack “Power Tools Sample Pack III” on the sample platform Splice. This caused a surge of social media posts demonstrating how the instrumental track could be recreated in little under a minute. This form of sampling—both cheap and legal, fast and convenient—represents a distinctly different take on sampling than that commonly associated with “golden age hip hop-productions”, where samples are extracted from existing recordings (Brøvig 2023; McLeod and DiCola 2011; Schloss 2004). Besides being more efficient, these sample platforms’ royalty-free models allow producers to use samples freely without fear of legal action.

Our presentation will begin by examining the factors leading to the emergence of cloud-based sample platforms. While the legal aspects might have contributed to the development of sampling platforms, we will also trace the platforms’ rootedness in less explored areas ranging from “library music,” to synthesizer preset cassettes and sample CDs bundled with music tech magazines (Cameron 2020). We will then discuss how these platforms, partly due to their mitigation of copyright issues, have contributed to transforming the sampling practices and aesthetics established by early hip-hop productions while also encouraging other forms of practices (Arrieta 2021). Lastly, we will discuss whether the advent of AI-generated music technology has the potential to disrupt the sample industry altogether. This work will draw on research on sampling, copyright and musical platforms, and include insights gained from our interviews with producers of sample packs.

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“Concepts of music production in digital audio workstation interfaces”

Emil Kraugerud

This paper explores ways in which DAWs interface with musical materials (such as representations of audio and musical notation), music production as process and concept, and sociocultural and material conditions of music production and software design and -development. More specifically, it focuses on the ways in which concepts of music production lay the grounds for and are reflected in the design of music production software, via examples from *Bitwig Studio*. By directing attention to the representation of musical and music production concepts in DAW design, the paper begins an exploration of how DAWs

work as interfaces, not only in terms of their affordances and interaction capabilities, but also how they mediate between different realities and ideologies including the ways in which they enmesh users in webs of labor, material and social conditions, capital and culture. Because, when using a DAW (or any other instrument for that matter), we rely on the work (and its conditions) that goes into making the DAW useable as a music-making tool. These issues will be explored through the lens of Galloway's (2012) concept of interface effects. The paper will then culminate in a brief discussion of what can be gained from such a critical approach to DAWs as interfaces, including how it may help envision what future music software design should strive for.

"Programming particularities"

Rosa Stilgren

This paper explores Ableton's Live through "software ontology" (Mackenzie, 2006), perceiving it as a critical site in which materialities of code and culture intersect to inform and modulate creative practices. While research has been focusing on the digitalization of music production, assimilating practices into digital logics of metadata and interconnectedness (Reuter, 2022), describing the computational modes of production (D'Errico, 2022), the specific conditions of digital audio workstations' development processes remain underdeveloped. This paper situates these logics in relation to the specific coding environment of Ableton's Live, exploring how particular cultural ideas and practices are embedded, negotiated, and operationalized within the software.

The interface of Live is conceptualized as a navigation system that structures interactions between human and non-human cognitive operations. This interface enacts a "typology of thinking" (Henke, 2016), dynamically connecting, disconnecting, and reconfiguring practices rooted in the legacies of techno culture. Crucially, this dynamic process extends beyond the modularity of the interface to the very architecture of the code.

Drawing on networked ethnography (Seaver, 2017), incorporating data from interviews, blog posts, web archives etc., this paper investigates how the development processes behind Live mediate and negotiate minimalistic logics from the perspective of practice as "problems of abundance" (Henke, 2016) and similarly as design principle (Schautz, 2017). By examining this intersection, the paper contributes to broader discussions on the cultural and cognitive implications of production platforms in the digital age.

"The remix turn in music streaming, finally? On the hybridization of production, distribution and use in modern streaming platforms"

Håvard Kiberg & Hendrik Spilker

Twenty years ago writers such as Henry Jenkins (2006) and Lawrence Lessig (2008) hailed the arrival of a "remix culture", a blurring of the boundaries between cultural production and use, socially and technologically. However, in the decade to follow, in the world of music, with the rise of legal streaming platforms basically distributing cleared content from the catalogs of professional music industry actors, the old dichotomies of artist and fan and production and use became reestablished (Spilker, 2018). With the "algorithmic turn" in music streaming, which dominated the 2010s, the dominant business strategy of the music streaming platforms, and the dominant mode of music consumption, was the machine-generated recommendations leaving the user in the stereotypically passive consumer role (Maasø and Spilker, 2022). All talk of a "remix culture" disappeared into the background in the academic discourse.

However, in the last few years, possibly to a large degree due to the success of TikTok, this picture has started to change. With TikTok as a forerunner, most streaming and social media

platforms today include options to do simple, and also quite advanced, audiovisual editing. In particular, we are witnessing a change in the design and features of, and the business and marketing strategies of Spotify and other dedicated music streaming platforms, which are the focus of this paper.

The emergence of user-friendly editing tools and integrated creation modules thus constitute key elements in the investments in music streaming platforms today. We see an expanded interest in converging different types of audio and video content (music, podcast, audiobook, vodcast, music video, canvas, etc.). These tools lower the threshold for content production and empower users to contribute creative content, while expanding the platform's ecosystem by integrating production, distribution and consumption into one cohesive experience. Spotify has announced an ambition to become “the world’s creator platform”, so far introducing basic audiovisual recording and editing tools for podcasters through the “Spotify for creators” platform (Spotify, 2022; 2024). The term “creators” is interesting in itself – an invention of a social class reachable to all Spotify users with enough effort and a part of Spotify's internal hierarchy that takes over some of the necessitation of the external category of “artists”.

Does all this signal that we are finally witnessing the coming of the remix culture that was on hold in the 2010s? What are the implications for future music production and creative participation and the power dynamics in the culture industry? In particular, how does this development challenge the position of traditional music production facilities, including Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs)? In this paper, we will approach this questions through a software design and business strategy analysis of Spotify and other music streaming platforms, based on both newly gathered empirical material as well as earlier insights from our long time engagement with streaming platforms’ design and strategies (Kiberg & Spilker, 2023; Maasø & Spilker, 2022).

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“There are two forms of platform music on TikTok”

Anders Bach Pedersen

How does the sparkling sheeny digi-bossanova of the genre *Frutiger Aero* relate to the now defunct, deconstructed mall-muzak of *Vaporwave*? And similarly, what does the feminized Hello Kitty-hellscape of trancey breakbeats in *Cutegore* have in common with the now old-school hyperactive animé-slaughterhouse-emo of *Nightcore*? These are examples of mutated micro-genres broadly discussed in both popular media and academia. Over time, these folksonomic musical expressions have intermingled and evolved due to specific platforms mediating and governing their aesthetics in specific ways. The object of inquiry of this presentation is TikTok, and I ask: in the constant bloom of new genres, what common traits can we formalize between genres in their current iterations, and what aesthetic hegemony particular to TikTok situates them? Is TikTok shaping the musical aesthetics of “internet-mediated musics” (Born, 2022; Tanni, 2024)?

This presentation argues that the production and circulation of music genres on TikTok can be distilled into two main forms: the forms of *nostalgia* (Tanner, 2023) and of *abjection* (Kristeva, 1980) – as per the introduction, *Frutiger Aero* into nostalgia and *Cutegore* into abjection. Central to this argument is the idea of an “absorption of modes of circulation into modes of production” (Ngai, 2015) governed by platform infrastructure and economy. The zero-latency infinite scroll of TikTok runs amok with circulation of content that reiterates the generic tropes of nostalgia and abjection over and over again. Whether it is the woozily detuned *nostalgia*core, or the eerie satanic trap of *sigilkore*, or any of the ones listed in the introduction, I encounter these two main forms time and again, and there are certain patterns of recognition that I will attempt to outline through analyses of *musical variables* (Harper, 2011) and *dialectical genre critique* (Jameson, 1981).

I ground my claim and analyses of nostalgia and abjection in several ethnographic scrapes of content and interaction-data, which pertains to my current PhD project. These include a qualitative leg – a local repository of videos downloaded directly from the platform – complemented by a quantitative one – sets of metadata and comments scraped via the Zeeschuimer API using a local 4CAT server (Peeters, 2023; Peeters & Hagen, 2022). This makes the presentation at hand an important first step in my attempt to formulate a central concept to my ongoing PhD research, that of *platform music*: intermedial music that can only exist as such on the infrastructural and conjunctural basis of a specific platform.

This intensity of circulation on TikTok is what makes the present mediation different from previous “internet-mediated musics”, and their platforms of choice. I relate this intensity to the aesthetics of *flow* in the present-immanentized, “Step on it!” cultural style of *immediacy* (Kornbluh, 2023): music genres on TikTok lean toward *moods* and *vibes*, they are short and to the point, reusing both visual and sonic material in perpetuity. Indeed, these ideas of mood and vibe permeate academia in lively discussion (Eriksson et al., 2019; Hesmondhalgh, 2022; Pelly, 2018). My take is not that of a value-judgment, but rather to state a connection between TikTok’s modus operandi – circulation – and the aesthetic hegemony, the *platform power* (Munkholm & Bach Pedersen, 2024), that it invokes. The “cutting to the chase”, “#manifest” immediatist style of TikTok’s content exudes the economic per-video payment scheme of the platform, engaging creators, producers and users to share, share, share. Thus, the shaping of musical aesthetics is first and foremost not a technological one, but one of political economy (Attali, 1985).

“DAW affordances and musical projects: The technological work of music making” Øyvind Skjerdal

As a supportive structure, a platform has its particular shape and size, and while some creative practices thrive on it, practices that move towards the edges of the platform are undertaken at the risk of falling off. This paper asks what kinds of work DAWs seem to support in that regard, and what kinds of work are precariously close to the edge.

The paper deals with technology use in the context of musical projects, and more specifically, it deals with the use of digital audio workstations (DAWs) in the work of music making. Using James Gibson’s concept of affordances (1979), it highlights some of the ways in which encounters between music makers and DAWs are shaped by music makers’ work context. Affordances has been a central concept in music production research for understanding technology use, and DAW use in particular (see Mooney 2011, Bell 2015, Bennett 2018). The focus on DAW features in these contributions have produced valuable, but at times narrow understandings of the role of DAWs in producers’ work. In this paper, I attempt to widen the gaze the concept of affordances offers by highlighting music producers’ musical projects and their project work as the context for their DAW use. I emphasize how music makers’ work is organized around musical projects, and explore the fit between specific

features of DAWs, like speed, abundance, flexibility and portability, and similar features of project work (see McRobbie 2016).

The paper draws on interviews with Norwegian music makers who work with DAWs to look into questions about the kinds of working opportunities DAW technologies seem to offer people in their musical projects, and discusses the significance of DAWs as technological platforms for music makers who aspire to develop a meaningful working life in the Norwegian music industry.

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“Cheap music? The role of AI platforms in the production of library music”

Ellis Jones

Library music (or sometimes ‘production music’) is created specifically as ‘background’ for television, film, games, and digital media. It is a significant sector of the music industries, with annual revenues of around \$1bn (Forde 2022). Nonetheless, it has a reputation as non-prestigious and unglamorous music, seen as a ‘a lower-quality alternative’ (Huelin 2022) to other forms of composition, or, in the words of a 2014 Pitchfork article, a ‘dusty field’ (Patrin 2014).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, it has been a key area of focus for several AI music start-ups, who have identified library music as low-hanging fruit for emulation and replacement. Numerous services have emerged that seek to offer a simplified process for non-musicians to create AI-enabled or AI-assisted library music, without requiring any substantial musical expertise. Focussing on this contemporary area of technologically-enabled change will enable me to contribute to the study of the platformization of music production in three key ways.

First, I will examine how existing production music companies – including many ‘platformized’ companies – are responding to the challenge posed by AI. Many are offering up their libraries as a source for AI training (some in consultation with their users), opting for a short-term payout while acknowledging the long-term risk to their business model. Second, I will conduct a platform ‘walkthrough’ analysis of key AI-assisted platforms for creating or editing library music, illustrating how certain musical concepts are elided or ‘translated’ for a non-musical audience. In particular, the role of genre and affective key words take on a new significance as short-hand reference points for specific desirable sound-worlds.

Third, and most substantially, I will analyse the discursive character of the response from library music composers, communities and companies. On the one hand, the encroachment of AI in library music has the capacity to reveal an already-existing ‘mechanical’ aspect to the work. As one library composer states, the library composer’s descriptive “brief” is comparable to the AI “prompt”, and the job of returning appropriate music “already feels like machine work in a way” (Robinson, 2024). On the other hand, many have sought to defend library music, such as the UK’s Musicians’ Union, who use this threat to establish a dichotomy between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ AI: “established electronic auteurs [Brian Eno and Holly Herndon] incorporating AI is one thing, more concerning is the implication it has for [...] library music

composers, for example” (Musicians’ Union, 2023). Even this defensive stance, however, would seem to admit the replaceability of library music producers, and their lesser status compared to popular music stars. This ambivalence will be explored in relation to the Musicians’ Union’s historic disdain for library music, including a ‘total embargo on library recording’ between 1965 and 1978 (Roy 2023).

This is contextualised within my broader research on the notion of ‘cheap music’ – which spans the 19th–21st centuries to consider how types of music (and music commodities) are ascribed value and anti-value. The meeting of AI music and library music – as two forms of ‘cheap music’ – is a particularly appropriate site to investigate how issues of labour, technology, aesthetic value, and functional use are conflated in moral economy debates around these fields.

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“Jumping from platform to platform: How game music composers negotiate the industries of music, games and technology”

Yngvar Kjus & Fabian Stordalen

This paper investigates how video game composers operate at the intersection of music, games, and technology, focusing on the role of production platforms, such as Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) and emerging AI tools in shaping creative practice. Based on qualitative interviews with composers, the study explores how such production tools are woven into workflows, aesthetics, and collaboration. DAWs form the core environment through which composers sketch, produce, and integrate music into interactive systems. They enable experimentation with adaptive structures, coordination with programmers and designers, and the translation of musical ideas into game-ready assets. Increasingly, these processes are intersecting with developments in generative AI, including tools for music generation, stem separation, and adaptive audio behaviors. Rather than replacing composers, such tools seem to be being integrated into existing DAW-based workflows, prompting shifts in how composers conceptualize authorship, efficiency, and control. The integration of AI tools introduces new questions about automation, creativity, and the distribution of agency in the compositional process.

“Dual aspects of platformization of Jhumair: Construction, continuity, and preservation of a musical tradition at the grassroot level”

Spandita Das

A characteristic musical tradition of the former Manbhum region, Jhumair Geet is an accompaniment to everyday life in Purulia and Jhargram of West Bengal. Much of the existing research studies Jhumair’s musicological and historical aspects (Mahato 2006, Dey and Pandey 2022), but very few examine its contemporary state. However, anxieties about its presumed degradation consistently surfaced during my extensive conversations with its

practitioners. A factor informing this anxiety is many regional, popular songs with shallow lyrics and fast, catchy rhythm that allegedly spoil the local listeners' taste are regularly packaged as Jhumur that find huge listenership through digital platforms. Opposing what is perceived as obscenity, there has been activism over time to retain the integrity of the genre through publication of books, organization of meetings, workshops, and constitution of cultural forums.

Recently, several practices crystallizing around digital platforms variously promote adi, i.e., old or traditional Jhumair. First, Facebook and YouTube facilitate public discourses within artists, listeners, and local intellectuals through various groups and communities about their culture. Second, individuals who record live performances and upload these on digital platforms, especially YouTube and Facebook, are often driven by a conservationist impulse and have constituted a forum recently to maintain the standard of content they promote. Digital platforms thus constitute capacious repositories for locally practiced Jhumair. Third, digital platforms give grassroot-level practitioners, especially the young ones, get some recognition thereby helping them receive invitations for live programs in and outside local circles. These practices are nonetheless fraught with the drawbacks of digital platforms, foremost among these is how algorithms determine the visibility of content so that commercial Jhumair music-videos largely dominate online.

I begin by underlining the larger singing-and-listening communities' dual ways of engaging with digital platforms resulting in construction of a refined Jhumair tradition and mass production and consumption of its popular version against which the tradition is defined. I see the aforementioned online communities as constitutive of public spaces (Baym and boyd 325, Deo 142) where exchanges of songs and music-related thoughts flourish within the singing-and-listening community. Then I consider the "precarious" (Bake and Collins 5) state of the repositories on digital platforms shaped by the passion to collect and archivize, albeit ridden with the vagaries of platforms, but, as the idea of "secondary orality" suggests (Ong 132-35), ultimately continuous with both the embodied practice of transfer of cultural knowledge (Taylor 16) conventionally accomplished by the nachni and chhou artists who memorize and publicize Jhumair through performances and the local practice of publishing and selling by artists of the compilations of their songs at the sites of public gathering like bus-stands. Citing my in-depth interactions with twelve singers and four YouTubers of Purulia and Jhargram, I finally contend platformization (Poell et al. 5), despite some drawbacks, at the grassroot level, has the potential to nourish folk music genres like Jhumair.

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"TikTok and the Commodification of Remix Culture"

Valentina Paskar

In 2007, Lev Manovich posited that while postmodernism defined the 1980s, remix culture would dominate the 2000s and likely extend into the following decade. As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, remixing has not only persisted but has become a vital part of our digital landscape, increasingly accessible and pervasive. As Spotify develops built-in remix

features to compete with TikTok, the convergence of these platforms signals a transformative era for sound-based media, where the boundaries between production and consumption blur. This paper looks at how platform affordances of TikTok shape aesthetic choices in contemporary remix culture, with speeding up tracks, the prevalence of mashups, and the embrace of noisy and glitchy sonic textures. These practices reflect broader conversations about file sharing, digital formatting, and the regulation of user agency. Through employing content and platform analysis, we argue that TikTok represents a pioneering corporate culture of remixing that has gained global traction, setting a precedent for platforms like Spotify and Apple Music to follow suit. However, this appropriation of remix culture raises critical concerns about the potential threats to creativity and authenticity within the genre, urging a reevaluation of the future of musical expression.

“Curating on digital social media platforms from ethnic minority musicians in China”

Lijuan Qian

In contemporary China, across divergent positions, relationships and cultural initiatives, people regularly connect with one another via digital social media platforms. Music-related activities are favourite mediations in this set of new communicative practices. Participation by members of ethnic minority communities brings them new opportunities to sustain and promote their endangered music traditions.

This paper reports on ECura, a five-year community-engaged ERC Starting Grant project. Working in collaboration with members of three villages (Yi, Bai and Miao people) from China's multi-ethnic Southwest, ECura's central question is: How can we empower ethnic minority groups to become the main actors in sustaining their indigenous culture via their wide participation on mobile digital media platforms? The project seeks to transform village musicians from culture bearers into culture-creators, -sustainers and -curators—protagonists for their own digital materials. The project includes the development of a spoken language-oriented database dedicated to their music and dance artistry and an associated software program that can be used on digital social media platforms, enabling villagers to record, share and locate their musical heritage digitally without having to work through written Chinese.

This paper addresses two aspect of ethnic minority musicians' engagement with the social media platforms WeChat and Douyin (Chinese versions of WhatsApp and Tiktok respectively) and other video sharing platforms. First, I explore how to assist community members in acquiring key capacities of self-reliance in sustaining their indigenous culture through their digital participation. Here, I discuss issues of copyright and benefit sharing arising from their active participation in social media platform in a context where media companies proprietorial practices set a barrier to community members in realising the economic and cultural potential of their cultural heritage over the longer term. Second, to provide, through long-term technological assistance and collaboration, high-quality video materials from ethnic minority members organised into a globally connected and sustainable digital database with full accompanying identification data. 1) Because of the system requirement of these digital platform apps and the quality degradation that occurs at various phases (capturing, encoding, and storage and transmitting of video), these crowdsourced cultural products produced by ethnic minority musicians are usually very short, fragmented and of low digital quality; 2) These self-produced video clips additionally disappear quickly from the database of these platforms because there is no planned long-term back up technology and the technicians sustaining the platforms usually lack professional knowledge in sorting and storing them from the perspective of sustaining cultural heritage.

The methods to work together with the village musicians are as follows: first, use applied ethnography approach such as daily communication (both online and off-line), community

outreach, workshops, etc; second, set up a website so that all the gathered videos uploaded to digital social media platforms can be viewed and accessed by internet users worldwide; third, set up Multilingual Parallel Corpus of Yunnan Ethnic Minority Music. The corpus aims to facilitate minority musicians to readily make subtitles in the forms of Chinese and English in addition to their low- (or under-) resourced indigenous languages, so the videos they produced could be understood better and appreciated by more audience groups.

“For your streaming pleasure: Livestreaming music production as content across platforms”

Rasmus Riegels Sørensen

In recent years music producers have taken their Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) to online streaming platforms intended for live-streaming video games. These streams have especially been successful for EDM genres like house and techno, where the production has become a public and interactive spectacle, contrasting with the previously solitary nature of music production (Butler, 2014).

This paper argues that the musicality of electronic music, which has a modular logic at its very core, is about designing and sculpting a sonic material (Cox, 2011) through a modular path of processes, in which signals of waveforms are both modulators and soundwaves (Reuter, 2024). This means that the work being done by electronic music producers concerns work on a signal, either by synthesizing it or by processing already existing sonic materials such as samples often downloaded from online services such as Splice (Arrieta, 2021). This digital signal is able to penetrate the multisided markets of modern-day platforms, where it is manipulated inside the DAW, simultaneously streamed through Twitch and YouTube, discussed in Discogs, and becomes the core of a product that people wants to support on PayPal, while simultaneously working as a branding tool for the electronic artists' careers, typically as DJs (Nieborg & Poell, 2018). The paper will demonstrate how the stream is not a static one-way communication from the streamer to the viewer, but rather it is a space for creative collaborations, because the viewers are able to interact by suggesting changes to the modular process in the comment sections without needing to be physically present to interact with the sonic material, as shown by examples of live-streams from techno producers Commissar Lag and John Selway.

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“Mr. Bill: a case study of the entangled platforms of electronic music production”

Baptiste Bacot

Mr. Bill is a professional producer and educator who has been publishing content for over fifteen years. As an Ableton Live expert user, he regularly livestreams his music production sessions on Twitch. This content—the video files, the Ableton Live sets, and other resources as well—is available on his website (mrbillstunes.com). Additionally, Mr. Bill is the founder of Billegal Beats, a music and sample pack label that publishes material on music streaming platforms and Splice, respectively. These activities, along with music releases, touring, merchandising sales, are promoted and discussed on a dedicated Discord server. Mr. Bill is therefore serves as a perfect case for questioning the entangled platforms that support electronic music production on various levels.

By exploring the material Mr. Bill has generated over the last decade, this paper addresses two questions regarding research methodology and musical creativity. Firstly, it examines the issues surrounding the value of music platformization data: how can the wealth of digital information generated be leveraged for empirical musicology and popular music studies? Secondly, it engages with the impacts of platformization on musical creativity: whereas music production has always been a covert activity, it is now conducted in semi-public and interactive formats where viewers can watch and comment. What is the weight of this new setting on the creativity of the producers and eventually, on the final product? Concluding remarks will highlight the layered and interdependent structure of platforms as key factor for building a successful career, while also reassessing the so-called “democratization” that companies claim to bring through their digital products.

“Functional streaming”

Joseph Coughlan-Allen

Streaming, the dominant format for music consumption, has profoundly altered music's role in daily life, but has also altered music itself. Streaming platforms persistently encourage listeners to use music as a tool for mood regulation and activity enhancement through curated playlists and streams, with some genres being appropriated and rebranded for such roles. Yet, the broader effects of this hyper-functionality on music production practices remains underexplored. This paper addresses this gap through a case study of lo-fi hip-hop. Originating in the early 2000s, lo-fi hip-hop was rebranded in the 2010s as “music to relax/study to” by online curators and was relocated to streaming platforms such as YouTube and Spotify. Its rhythms, grooves, and structures subsequently evolved to fit its new online environment and functional role, becoming regularised and more predictable. One key factor in this change is the prominence of instructional media aimed at prospective producers outlining how to create music for functional streaming. This paper examines music production discourse across online media from 2010 to 2024 to investigate how lo-fi hip-hop production practices have adapted to the demands of its functional role on streaming platforms. It focuses on shifts in how lo-fi hip-hop is defined and described in articles and videos aimed at lo-fi hip-hop producers to explore how the functionalisation and platformisation of the genre aligns with broader shifts in music consumption and production practices.

“Mood, focus, engagement? Framing attention in the digital, platformized music culture”

Håvard Kiberg & Anja Nylund Hagen

The term “*attention*” has, in recent years, become central to scholarly, public, and industry discussions surrounding the growing theorization of “*music platformization*” (Gauvin, 2018; Kiberg, 2023; Pelly, 2018). Various interrelated concepts—such as “*attention spans*” (Owsinski, 2018), “*the attention economy*” (Gauvin, 2018), and “*attention dependency*”

(Mulligan, 2021)—have collectively shaped our understanding of the digital music zeitgeist, often framing attention as a scarce but highly desirable resource, one that is managed and monetized upon by diverse actors within the platform-driven music economy.

Attention has been invoked to analyze user-patterns, such as high skip-rates (Owsinski, 2018), the rise of algorithmic curation designed for shorter attention spans (Dyke, 2024), and the emergence of new genres and production approaches (Pelly, 2018; Kiberg, 2023). Notably, genres like background music, ambient, or muzak have been highlighted as forms of music that eschew direct engagement (Kiberg, 2023), instead serving as tools for contextualizing and facilitating everyday activities, mood regulation, or emotional balance.

Despite its broad applicability, however, the concept of "attention" is rarely clearly defined, leading to vague or inconsistent interpretations depending on the context or analytical focus. This paper, therefore, has three primary aims: First, it seeks to conceptualize "*attention*" in the context of today's digital and platform-driven music culture—considering its cultural, psychological, and economic dimensions. Second, it critically discuss how online distribution and production platforms, as well as other actors of the digital music economy (such as various artists, producers, distributors, publisher or AI music generators, e.g., Epidemic Sound, Lofi Girl, Suno AI, and more) capitalize on contextualizing music for different modes of attention—both through the platforms algorithmic prioritization of mood, activity, and emotion-driven playlists, and through music production practices that aligns with diverse listening contexts and preferences. Finally, it will also explore how users of music platforms navigate and interact with these curated structures, aiming to deepen our understanding of how users engage with platform frameworks while shaping their own user practices.

The paper will primarily draw on insights from the authors' previous research on music platformization. On the one hand, it will build on a qualitative interview study with 15 Norwegian music creators (artists, producers, songwriters) in order to discuss the continuous negotiations taking place between logics of platformization and music production practices – highlighting how artists and creators of music adapt to online platforms, contextualized playlists and their embedded modes of attention, when writing, composing and producing music (Kiberg, 2023). This also involves reflections on the ways in which different production platforms and Digital Audio Workstations shape the creators approaches to music production, among other things through the offering of various templates, presets, or plugins. On the other hand, the paper will draw on insights from previous research on users of music streaming platforms, examining how listeners experience and integrate music into their daily lives – including the ways in which streaming services afford, facilitate, and structure music for various modes of engagement, involvement, and attention (Hagen, 2015). Particular emphasis will be placed on the interplay and dynamics between individuals, technology, music, and context, in order to analyze the role digital platforms play in shaping listeners' everyday experiences and interactions with music. Theoretically, the paper will draw on phenomenological sociology (Schütz, 1967) and music sociology (DeNora, 2000) to define and conceptualize how attention can be understood in light of cultural, social, and technological dimensions. Moreover, it will draw on insights from affordance theory (Gibson, 1986) in order to analyze how platform interfaces and algorithms comes to shape both production and listening practices, symbiotically. Finally, we will draw on platform studies (van Dijck et al., 2018; Poell et al., 2022) to critically discuss the relationship between platforms and humans, understood as sociotechnical constructs, where technological infrastructures, commercial interests, and user practices collectively shape the power and dynamics of the platformized music culture. Ultimately, the paper addresses the following RQs:

How can the concept of attention be understood as both an economic resource and a socio-cultural practice in today's platform-oriented music culture?

In what ways do different actors of the music platform industry capitalize on producing and contextualizing music for different modes of attention?

And how do users of music platforms navigate, negotiate and integrate these structures into their everyday practices of music production and consumption?

Conceptualizing and defining the term “attention” is crucial for critically analyzing today’s ecosystems of platformized music culture—encompassing the symbiotic relationship between music production, distribution, and consumption. Both distribution and production platforms today facilitate various forms of use (both in creating and listening to music) that align with specific modes of attention, contexts, and moods. Notably, various, partly controversial collaborations across streaming platforms, distribution companies, and producers have recently highlighted how the attention economy and commercial interests shape new production and distribution strategies. For example, the program “The Perfect Fit” (Pelly, 2024)—a recently revealed collaboration between Spotify and Epidemic Sound, where music tailored to specific contexts and user experiences is produced and promoted through curated playlists and favorable royalty agreements—illustrates how platform logics and modes of attention actively influence the production and consumption of music. The recent rise of AI-generated music and the so-called “fake artists controversy”, further underscores how platforms’ technological and economic structures shape both user practices and musical expressions. Taken together, these developments raise critical questions about how attention functions as both a cultural and economic currency in the complex ecosystem of platformized music production.

“S.T.R.E.A.M.: Streaming Technology Research: Effects on Artists and Music Production”

Nicolas Ruth

This proposal aims to present a recently submitted research project that investigates the impact of music streaming services (MSS) on the creative processes and production practices in popular music. Streaming platforms have fundamentally transformed the music industry, influencing both the creation and consumption of music. The project focuses on three interconnected areas: the influence of MSS on music composition and songwriting, on music production practices, and on the experiences of performing musicians. By addressing these areas, the research aims to uncover the structural changes brought about by streaming, analyze its influence on the musical value chain, and provide strategies for musicians to navigate these developments. The project employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods such as in-depth interviews, surveys, and experimental studies. Preliminary work includes an in-depth interview with a producer of two major German acts, offering key insights into the changing creative landscape. The producer emphasized three notable trends: 1., musicians often reproduce familiar patterns they associate with streaming platforms rather than asking how musical structures might work optimally for MSS; 2., musicians themselves display shorter attention spans, leading to a preference for concise and impactful music; and 3., studio work increasingly takes place in short, focused sessions, reflecting the structure of songwriting camps rather than traditional, extended workflows.

The overarching goal of this project is to better understand the interplay between new streaming technologies and creative processes, while exploring how MSS affect the early stages of music production. Additionally, the project seeks to examine the acceptance and usage of MSS among musicians. The results aim to provide insights for artists, producers, and industry stakeholders, contributing to a deeper understanding of these transformations and enabling informed strategies to adapt to the evolving dynamics of the music industry.

Program

Friday May 2

09:00 Registration with coffee and fruits ([Salen, ZEB-building 1U71](#))

09:30 Welcome and opening talk

09:45 Session 1: Platforms and music making (Chair: Emil Kraugerud)

- Bondy Kaye & David Hesmondhalgh: "What do musicians think of digital platforms? A focus group study of musicians and platformization in England"
- Carsten Wernicke & Jan Herbst: "The platformization of songwriting: An exploration of the Interplay between technological constraints, creative agency, and cultural production"
- Vemund Hegstad Alm & Ragnhild Brøvig: "The emergence and potential decline of cloud-based sample platforms"

11:15 Coffee break

11:30 Session 2: Making platforms (Chair: Øyvind Skjerdal)

- Emil Kraugerud: "Concepts of music production in digital audio workstation interfaces"
- Rosa Stilgren: "Programming particularities (in Ableton Live)"

12:30 Lunch

13:30 Keynote by Paul Théberge: "Any Sound an AI Can Imagine: Making music in the age of platform culture" (Chair: Yngvar Kjus)

15:00 Coffee break

15:15 Session 3: Music in the age of TikTok (Chair: Fabian Stordalen)

- Håvard Kiberg & Hendrik Spilker: "The remix turn in music streaming, finally? On the hybridization of production, distribution and use in modern streaming platforms"
- Anders Bach Pedersen: "There are two forms of platform music on TikTok"

16:15 End of program

17:00 Reception (drinks and light food) ([HF12, Niels Treschows Hus](#))

Saturday May 3

09:00 Coffee & Fruits ([Salen, ZEB-building 1U71](#))

09:30 Session 4: Negotiating production platforms (Chair: Emil Kraugerud)

- Øyvind Skjerdal: "DAW affordances and musical projects: The technological work of music making"
- Ellis Jones: "Cheap music? The role of AI platforms in the production of library music"
- Yngvar Kjus & Fabian Stordalen: "Jumping from platform to platform: How game music composers negotiate the industries of music, games and technology"

11:00 Coffee Break

11:15 Session 5: Networked music communities. Online. (Chair: Øyvind Skjerdal)

- Spandita Das: "Dual aspects of platformization of Jhumair: Construction, continuity, and preservation of a musical tradition at the grassroots level"
- Valentina Paskar: "TikTok and the Commodification of Remix Culture"

12:15 Lunch

13:15 Session 6: Interacting on platforms (Chair: Yngvar Kjus)

- Lijuan Qian: "Curating on digital social media platforms from ethnic minority musicians in China"
- Rasmus Riegels Sørensen: "For your streaming pleasure: Livestreaming music production as content across platforms"
- Baptiste Bacot: "Mr. Bill: a case study of the entangled platforms of electronic music production"

14:45 Coffee break

15:00 Session 7: The experience of platforms (Chair: Fabian Stordalen)

- Joseph Coughlan-Allen: "Functional Streaming (of lo-fi hip-hop)"
- Håvard Kiberg & Anja Nylund Hagen: "Mood, focus, engagement? Framing attention in the digital, platformized music culture"
- Nicolas Ruth: "S.T.R.E.A.M.: Streaming Technology Research: Effects on Artists and Music Production"

16:30 Summary and closing comments

16:45 End of program

18:00 Optional dinner/drinks: Vippra, foodcourt in downtown Oslo. [You can check out their menu here](#) (partly in English, partly in Norwegian. Ask [Emil](#) if you have any questions).