What the Buzz?!?!, AKA.

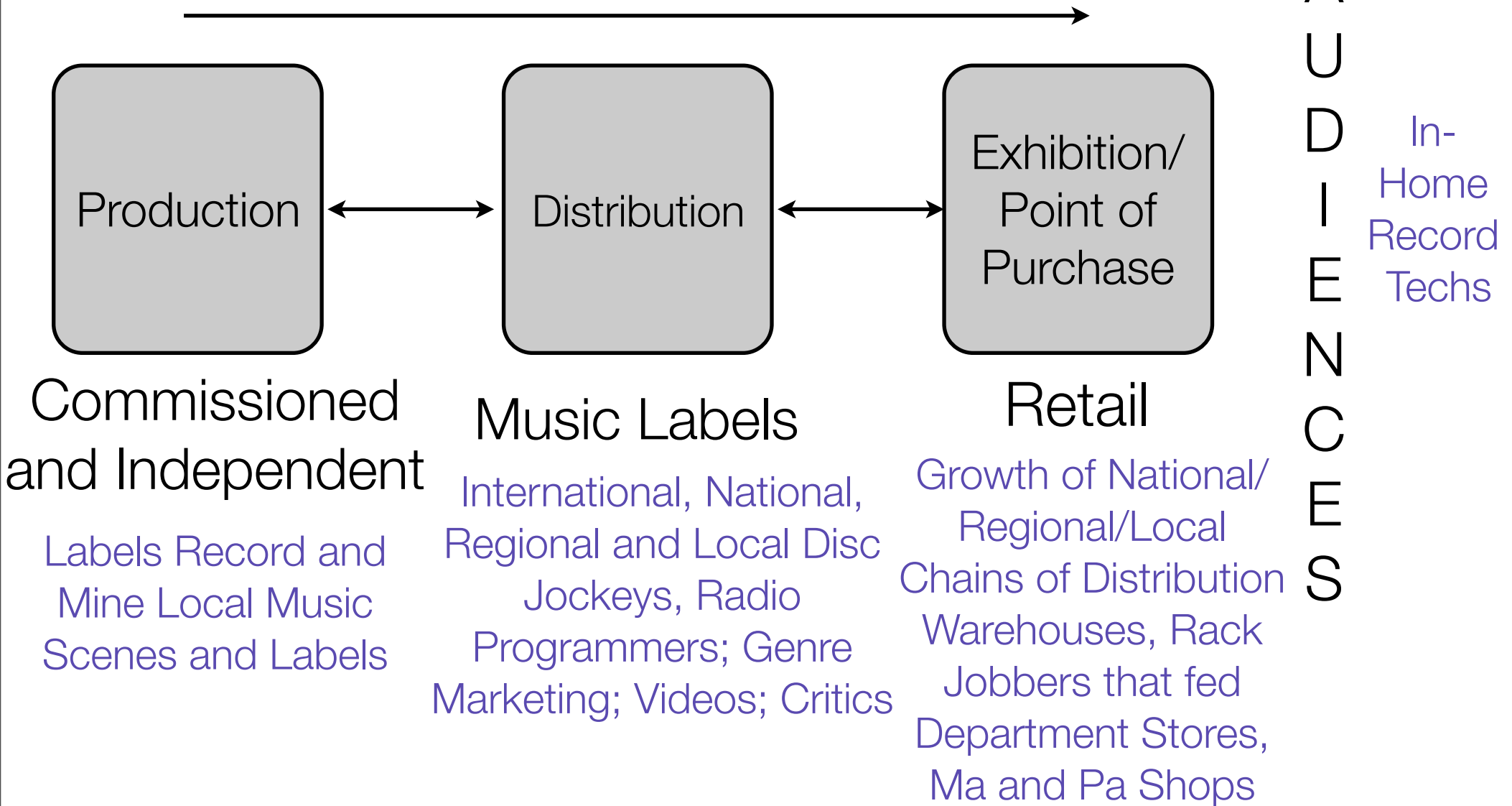Blogging and Distribution and the Experiential Products in the Age of Social Networking

Control of Distribution (Marketing and Circulation) is Key for The Success Experience Goods in The Marketplace

- Media Products are not only information goods, but "experience goods" - Reca, p. 182

    - "products whose quality is difficult to observe or sample adequately before purchase." - Chang and Dhar

    - "For such products, consumers often rely on others as an input into their decision." –Chang and Dhar

    - The fact that they are experience goods "very often means that product management must seek to win the customer's trust" - Reca, p. 182

- In the case of Popular Music, Major Labels, for close to 50 years, controlled not only what to press and when, but also had the strongest promotional networks (ties to radio DJs, noted reviewers, record clubs, best licensing arrangements, ad budgets, etc.) - Frith

Mid to Late 20th Century Popular Music Culture

The Ability to Push and Pull Content Rests
with Music Labels, Who Control Distribution

→

Production ↔ **Distribution** ↔ **Exhibition/ Point of Purchase**

A U D I E N C E S

In-Home Record Techs

Commissioned and Independent

Labels Record and Mine Local Music Scenes and Labels

Music Labels

International, National, Regional and Local Disc Jockeys, Radio Programmers; Genre Marketing; Videos; Critics

Retail

Growth of National/ Regional/Local Chains of Distribution Warehouses, Rack Jobbers that fed Department Stores, Ma and Pa Shops

Older Model of Distribution: Music Print Press in Crisis

- August 2007 - UK's Press Gazette reported that less than half of the profit's from the UK best selling weekly music magazine, Kerrang!, come from print ad revenue and circulation. - Stabe

- On April 29, 2008, Crain's reports that Ad pages for the three biggest music magazines slid 26% in the first quarter." - Flamm

- Rolling Stone saw a 33% drop, according to Publishers Information Bureau - Flamm

- April 5th, 2008 Reuters reports that three niche music magazines fold: No Depression, Harp and Resonance. - Harding

- **In general we are seeing a shifting trend to online ads, a trend that is growing as music magazines alter their brands into cross-media platforms in competition with blogs for advertising dollars**

- Yet given these cross-media brands, why is blogging and social networking media embraced as a means of distribution and what does this teach us about digital social media?
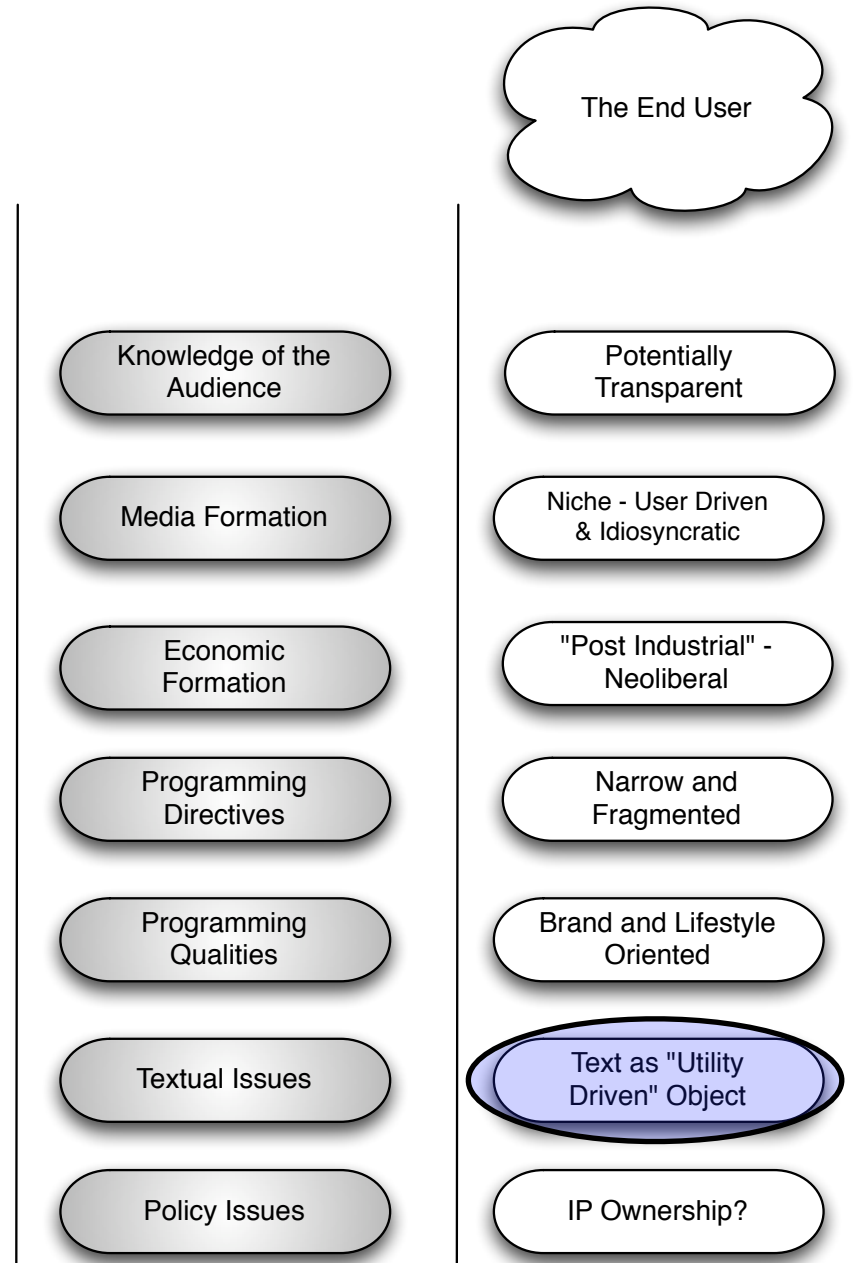
John Vanderslice on MP3 Blogs (Interviewed by Merlin Mann in Spring 2007)

	Mass Audience/ Citizen/Public	Consumer/ Commodity	The End User
Knowledge of the Audience	Mass (Unknown) Yet Probable and "Homogenized"	Researched, Pronounced and Qualifiable	Potentially Transparent
Media Formation	National	Niche - Quality National	Niche - User Driven & Idiosyncratic
Economic Formation	Industrial Regulated	Industrial Deregulated	"Post Industrial" - Neoliberal
Programming Directives	Obliged to Envision a Mass Audience	Quality and "Genre" Driven	Narrow and Fragmented
Programming Qualities	Obliged to Control and Program LOP	Demographic Appeals Result in Genre Hybridity	Brand and Lifestyle Oriented
Textual Issues	Consensus Narratives	Demo and Partisan Relevance	Text as "Utility Driven" Object
Policy Issues	Public Interest?	Consolidation and Multi Platform Branding	IP Ownership?

The Audience in a Convergent, Digital, Neo-Liberal Computer Culture

The End User

Knowledge of the Audience	Potentially Transparent
Media Formation	Niche - User Driven & Idiosyncratic
Economic Formation	"Post Industrial" - Neoliberal
Programming Directives	Narrow and Fragmented
Programming Qualities	Brand and Lifestyle Oriented
Textual Issues	Text as "Utility Driven" Object
Policy Issues	IP Ownership?

A Distributed, "Neo Liberal" Model Of New Media Culture

Server Side/Semantic/Cloud Computing(APIs, AJAX, etc.)

→

MP3s, Podcasts, Blogs, Mash-Ups, Flickr Sets, Online DBs, Online Chatter/Buzz, etc.

The Vast Scale of the Net and Production Demands "Ease of Data Association and Search"

1) granularity/ searchability

  a) metadata issues

2) reputation

  a) authority/ expertise/ credibiity

Text

Production ↔ Distribution ↔ Exhibition/ Point of Purchase

Text

Text

Text

Text

END USERS

User Generated Content

Signs of Music Print Press in Crisis

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Let's position "online chatter/buzz" as an affect-driven form of association and preview.

The Gestures and Affection of Our End User "Selves" as Connecting Tissues

- "The types of publics that gather on social network sites and the types of publics that such sites support are deeply affected by the mediated nature of interaction" -Boyd, p.8 (italics mine)

- Steve Gillmor on the "Gesturesphere": "Gestures have become big business. The politics of personality swamp us with messages that need to be triaged much like we used to parse advertising. Is this the program wrapped in signals or signals disguised as programming? Yes. It's an ugly space we're in, and nobody holds the high ground. We're all selling something, and of course it's ourselves."

  - Typical Gestures: "Friendship", "Politics", "Entrepreneurial", etc.-"Gesturesphere," http://gesturelab.com/?p=86

- Blogging and social networks provide value from their ability to express "authentic judgments" on specific "experience goods" such as music, literature, travel, food, software, religion, etc.

- Adapting from Deleuze and Guattari, one way to begin to think about these voices, gestures and the taggings, titles and descriptions that they accumulate are as particular "thingnesses" and "thatnesses", i.e. haecceities and quiddities. These non-qualitative individualities are then exposed as specific externalities that are filtered through specific contexts that both attract and passionately drive phenomena to form temporary alliances and activities resulting in ad hoc assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, pp 261-265).

Assemblage Theory as a Possible Way to Start Envisioning How and Why This is Happening

- "An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines. The number is no longer a universal concept measuring elements according to their emplacement in a given dimension, but has itself become a multiplicity that varies according to the dimensions considered. We do not have units of measure, only multiplicities or varieties of measurement" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 8).

- "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be"," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and…and…and…" This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 25).

Example - Assembling Youe Playlist Through a Combinations of Gestures and Metadata

- Folksonomies v. Taxonomies and Classfication
  - "Tagging" and Metadata
  - Pandora - "Taxonomic"
    - Music Genome Project
  - LastFM - "Folksonomic"
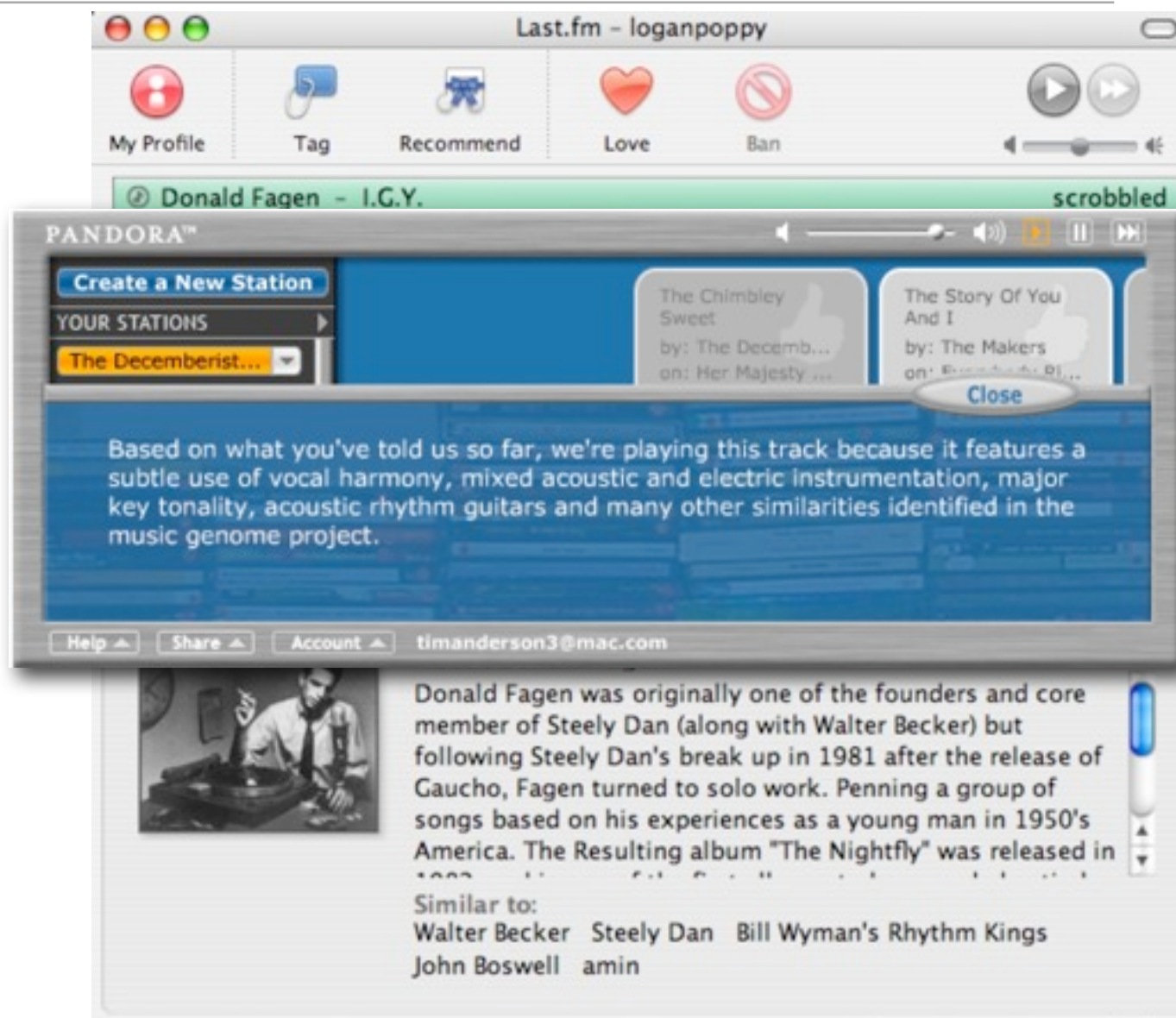
Exteriority, Connections and the Linkage in Assemblages

- In connecting and linking, blogging and social networks often operate to create assemblages that cannot be centrally controlled and depend on information's ability to be achieve a level of exteriority where it can be detached, inserted and connected to other spaces. Connected these assemblages create buzz, i.e. collective moments of network-driven attention

- DeLanda on assemblage as a useful social concept - "Today, the main theoretical alternative to organic totalities is what the philosopher Gilles Deleuze calls assemblages, wholes characterized by relations of exteriority. These relations imply, first of all, that a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different. In other words, the exteriority of relations implies a certain autonomy for the terms they relate, or as Deleuze puts it, it implies that 'a relation may change without the terms changing'" (DeLanda, pp.10-11).

- In this conception relations of exteriority correspond to issues of metadata and syndication, in other words the manner in which data is found and pushed. Data contents have no utility in this sense: it isn't the contents of a blog post or the MP3 that expose this data to opportunities for utility and linkage. Rather, it is the tags (metadata) and feeds (RSS) that allow these contents to be pushed, accessed and related to "specific others" within media ecologies. And as connections grow, so does a post's/mp3's "buzz/chatter" the temporary phenomena of networked attention.

- "if blog chatter is extremely high it is possible for an album to overcome the disadvantage of being released by an independent label. In fact, albums with such extreme highs in chatter correspond to sales even higher than major label high chatter albums" - Chang and Dhar

The Larger Trend - Expect loosely-associated online forms of assembled publicity to increasing as the source of significant forms of distribution

- Because a significant portion of distribution power is now in the hands of the end user Micro Networks can leverage affectionate forms of "trust" over the "progressivist authority" of Mass Networks

- Media theorists need to view Web 2.0 Spaces as Spaces of Social Performance and Gesticulation

  - The multiple examples that are "music oriented" (i.e. iLike, LastFm, Pandora, iMeem, The "Hype Machine) can be seen as part of the "discovery/navigation" layer of the music industry that may spread to other media arenas. Wilson, "The Free Music Business"

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