

## Written evidence submitted by Marcus Cain

### Economics of music streaming Inquiry Evidence

My name is Marcus Cain. I'm a bass player and composer currently based in Leeds. I am active in various different genres of music, such as my own original jazz projects, commercial pop music and wedding/function bands.

The Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the injustice of music streaming business models. As live performance and almost all other income streams that musicians rely on have been made unavailable to them during lockdown it would be reasonable to expect that they could rely on their recorded output to sustain them through the pandemic. However, given the way money is distributed to artists from streaming platforms, it is impossible for anyone but the biggest, most famous commercial artists (and their record labels) to be able to earn enough money to survive from streaming alone.

The ludicrously unfair way in which money is distributed by streaming platforms is the culmination of years of unfair and unjust deals for musicians. Musicians' revenue has been squeezed and squeezed over the past few decades to the point at which now find ourselves - where musicians earn basically nothing from their recorded output and have to tour and take on other types of work simply to recoup the losses incurred in the process of recording and releasing a single or album.

To give an example, I recently received a payment of \$0.0027 from Spotify for a stream of a song I recorded and released. The amount of money received per stream tends to fluctuate but it is always below one hundredth of a dollar, a basically non-existent amount of money (I have included a table of recent 'Digital Distribution Sales' of this song at the end of this document to demonstrate the varying amounts of money received per-stream). And the track in question is a solo piece that I recorded at home and self-released, had it been written and recorded by more than one person that non-existent amount of money would then have to be divided up between several people! Before the days of streaming, had someone bought and downloaded this song I would have received in the region of 50 pence. Had someone purchased the song in physical form, i.e. on CD or vinyl, I would have received even more than that depending on the distribution deal I was signed up to. This demonstrates how, as technology has advanced, musicians have been progressively conned out of more of their income until we've reached the point where you would need your song to be streamed thousands and thousands of times just to be able to afford a cup of coffee, never mind make back what it cost to record and release the music in the first place.

It is simply not sustainable for streaming services to continue to pay the creators of the very content they rely on next to nothing while lining the pockets of the international commercial artists and big labels. I remember going to see US band Snarky Puppy in

Manchester in 2017 when bass player and bandleader Michael League addressed the audience at the end of their set to say:

“there’s been a new thing that’s happened that’s revolutionised the world of music and it’s called streaming, and it’s such a beautiful thing that we can access music at the touch of a button. But for artists who don’t have the luxury of playing for large audiences and making their living that way streaming basically takes care of everyone except the artists, it basically pays everyone except the people creating the content.”

And with the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic meaning no artists can tour or make money through music any other way it may not be long before careers are ended indefinitely which would make the UK’s world-envied cultural and artistic output infinitely poorer.

The current business model used by most streaming services is incredibly convoluted and opaque but it essentially means that the vast majority of the money customers pay to the streaming services - usually around £10 per month - doesn’t go to the artists they listen to, it goes to the artists who are ‘performing’ the best, i.e. being listened to the most overall, according to their algorithms. I can’t think of any other business or industry that doesn’t pay the source of their service or product when that service or product is purchased. A supermarket would not give all of their income from nectarines to their apple supplier simply because apples are more popular, and if they did their nectarine supplier would soon go out of business. While that is a slightly contrived analogy I believe it highlights the issues, and most importantly the risks, involved in sustaining the current system - it is by its nature unsustainable.

I believe there needs to be more transparency when it comes to streaming business models so that inequitable elements can be exposed and corrected in order to protect artists from exploitation. When streaming first came along it was an entirely new concept and therefore no regulatory framework was in place to deal with this new way of distributing and consuming music. Unfortunately, this lack of preparedness has been exploited by certain streaming services to the detriment of artists. Regulation of streaming services can enable a fairer business models to become the norm - business models that pay artists fairly and therefore create a more secure and more trusted artistic ecosystem that will be sustainable for all involved. If the current system is allowed to carry on completely unregulated then artists will simply no longer be able to afford to provide streaming services with the ‘content’ they require and we would probably see a significant loss of artistic talent for generations to come.

# DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION SALES

REPORT	SALES	PARTNER	ARTIST	ALBUM	SONG	COVER	TYPE	QTY.	UNIT	PAYABLE
Nov 04, 2020	Sep 2020	YouTube Music	Marcus Cain	Pink	Pink	No	Stream	2.0	\$0.00720447	\$0.01440894
Oct 21, 2020	Sep 2020	iTunes - Apple Music - US	Marcus Cain	Pink	Pink	No	Stream	1.0	\$0.00810173	\$0.00810173
Oct 21, 2020	Jul 2020	Amazon US Premium Service	Marcus Cain	Pink	Pink	No	Stream	1.0	\$0.00625352	\$0.00625352
Oct 15, 2020	Jul 2020	Spotify	Marcus Cain	Pink	Pink	No	Stream	1.0	\$0.00267852	\$0.00267852
Oct 15, 2020	Jul 2020	Spotify	Marcus Cain	Pink	Pink	No	Stream	1.0	\$0.00470940	\$0.00470940
Sep 22, 2020	Aug 2020	iTunes - Apple Music - US	Marcus Cain	Pink	Pink	No	Stream	1.0	\$0.00798616	\$0.00798616
Sep 22, 2020	Aug 2020	iTunes - Apple Music - US	Marcus Cain	Pink	Pink	No	Stream	1.0	\$0.00422695	\$0.00422695
Sep 22, 2020	Jun 2020	Amazon US Premium Service	Marcus Cain	Pink	Pink	No	Stream	1.0	\$0.01306305	\$0.01306305
Sep 17, 2020	Jun 2020	Spotify	Marcus Cain	Pink	Pink	No	Stream	1.0	\$0.00183820	\$0.00183820
Aug 13, 2020	May 2020	Spotify	Marcus Cain	Pink	Pink	No	Stream	3.0	\$0.00296116	\$0.00888347
<b>PAGE TOTAL:</b>								<b>13.0</b>	<b>\$0.07214994</b>	

Recent 'Digital Distribution Sales' of a track of mine showing the varying amount of money paid per-stream.